

LONE-WOLF TERRORISM: AN OVERLOOKED THREAT

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Abstract

The issue of lone-wolf terrorism is not uniquely a modern one though it is a growing concern. Through the transforming utilization of the internet, terror groups have been able to recruit around the world, increasing the rate, regularity, and accessibility of radicalization. However, identifying, defining, and establishing cohesive cognitive, behavioral and intentional profiles of lone-wolf terrorists by way of analysis of historical case studies and review of current literature can assist in the prevention and apprehension of potential threats, prior to full radicalization. Identifying patterns amongst historical lone-wolf terrorists can establish greater reliability with regard to apprehension, prevention, and decreasing radicalization in an increasingly digital era.

This study was conducted via analysis of historical case studies, review of current literature, and exploration of current world trends. First, historical case studies of lone-wolf terrorism were collected and analyzed to (1) define essential foundational terminology, (2) establish profiles of historically significant lone-wolf terrorists and (3) identify and analyze cohesive patterns amongst these cognitive and behavioral profiles. In conjunction with analysis of historical case studies, a review of current literature served as a basis for exploration of transforming global trends of radicalization and the implications and response on law enforcement approaches to the apprehension of potential lone-wolf terrorists.

The results of current literature facilitated modern definitions of radicalization and lone-wolf terrorism. As technology, political agendas, and religious beliefs transform with the modern era, so do the definitions of lone-wolf terrorism and radicalization. The rate and accessibility of radicalization and radicalized propaganda have exponentially grown throughout the modern era.

This study found that there are patterns amongst lone-wolf terrorism cognitive and behavior profiles with regard to their actions prior to executing violent attacks. These patterns include, but are not limited to, propaganda material sought online and radicalized thoughts regarding political or religious entities. Identifying common profile traits for vulnerable individuals can assist law enforcement in preventing future attacks by intervening with these individuals prior to the complete radicalization of political or religious beliefs.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Radicalization often serves as the catalyst which formulates lone-wolf terrorists. As the modern technological era continuously introduces faster, easier means of communication across the globe, the rate and accessibility of radicalization have greatly increased. Much like the transformation definition of radicalization, what defines a lone-wolf terrorist has also adapted to the new world of differing political agendas and religious beliefs. As the process of radicalization and facilitation of full lone-wolf terrorism has expanded, the need for consistent monitoring, identification, and prevention has become evident.

This thesis explores the ideas surrounding lone-wolf terrorism, the misconceptions, definitions, methods, and future prevention. This analysis of historical and modern sources aims to identify the connectedness of personality and cognitive traits amongst historically significant lone-wolf terrorists. Furthermore, this study of historical and current literature will aim to develop a generalized profile of common sequential steps of radicalization. Finally, a predictive analysis of apprehension and preventive measures implications for law enforcement in the future will be explored and established.

The topic of lone-wolf terrorism has been largely overshadowed by the media and academics with the rise of major terror organizations and the rise of state-sponsored terror. However, as media attention diverts away from lone-wolf terrorism, it continues to grow, develop and adapt to an ever-changing world. Lone-wolf terrorism continues to impact local, state, and federal government, as a potential threat to public safety. As the modern era continues to allow for increased accessibility to radicalized materials, the rate of radicalization of vulnerable individuals increases.¹

¹ Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Audrey Alexander, and Nick Kaderbhai. 2017. "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment.", 1234

Radicalization has been greatly impacted by the introduction of the internet, modern-day technology, and the evolution of communication.² This has been a growing issue along with the growth of the internet.³ Now, with a smartphone in most pockets and much of the youth of the US being online, the potential of being radicalized may be a few clicks away. Long gone are the days where a terror group would have to wait for over-enthusiastic recruits to fly to a training camp and assimilate with their culture. With the use of the internet, terror groups could easily be right in front of you. Their propaganda can feed into the radical ideology, their training can prepare a person for a major incident.⁴ All of this, just because someone clicked a few times. Radicalization is not a process that is solely initiated, rather, every individual is radicalized to a particular degree, toward their personal, religious, or political beliefs. As explored throughout this thesis, the radicalization process is further pursued by the individual. It is the specific individual who seeks out radicalizing propaganda or chat rooms online. Thus, international terror groups or like-minded individuals are provided the opportunity to further coerce these vulnerable individuals to full radicalized thoughts and toward future potentially violent actions. This thesis will go into detail about the issues of radicalization and lone-wolf terrorism, as well as the use of the internet. It will also address how lone-wolf terrorism has impacted law enforcement prevention and investigations.

Lone-wolf terrorism does not just affect countries thousands of miles away or across the globe, rather, it is a growing problem on American soil, throughout communities, and across the country. From a historical perspective, there are many consistencies amongst previous lone-wolf

² Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Audrey Alexander, and Nick Kaderbhai. 2017. "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment.", 1234

³ Frissen, Thomas. "Internet, the Great Radicalizer? Exploring Relationships between Seeking for Online Extremist Materials and Cognitive Radicalization in Young Adults.", 1

⁴ Ibid., 1

terrorists, with regard to their cognitive, behavioral, and motivational profiles. Although radicalization has the potential to impact any given individual, there are those individuals who are at greater risk for developing radicalized thought processes, seeking out radical propaganda, and acting on violent intentions. Developing a profile of characteristics for these individuals will allow for identification and intervention before complete radicalization.

Developing a profile for potential lone-wolf terror threats will allow law enforcement the opportunity to identify these individuals early in the radicalization process, which may decrease the rate of radicalization and the potential threats to public safety. Law enforcement currently utilizes meta-data analysis to determine keyword searches and monitor online activity.⁵ However, establishing patterns by utilizing previous case studies allows for the identification of specific personality, cognitive and behavioral traits prior to the individuals seeking out propaganda. This will stop the complete radicalization process before proceeding past the general public radicalization, thus decreasing the likelihood of a violent attack. This paper seeks to demonstrate how identifying cohesive patterns of profiles amongst historical lone-wolf terrorists, can establish greater reliability with regard to apprehension, prevention, and decreasing the rate of radicalization in an increasingly digital era.

The methodology of this study consisted of utilizing existing primary and secondary resources as well as conducting an extensive analysis of case studies to establish predictive profiles and modern-day trends of lone-wolf terrorists. First, historical literature and case studies were collected to establish a foundational understanding of core vocabulary and previously analyzed information. Each historically significant case study was explored to determine the

⁵ Metadata, Pomerantz, Jeffrey The MIT Press, 2015., 118-122

characteristics demonstrated in the radicalization individual, as well as the steps taken toward full radicalization. Additionally, analysis of historical resources, case studies, and reports, as well as primary and secondary sources allowed for the development and exploration of how establishing a predictive profile based on previous lone-wolf terrorists, can aid law enforcement in determining at-risk individuals in the modern era.

In addition to historical literature and case studies, a review of the current literature was conducted to further explore the transforming trends of radicalization and law enforcement response. This review consisted of analyzing several current research studies, reviews of literature, and meta-analysis regarding lone-wolf terrorism and the impact the digital age has had on radicalization. Following literature and case-study review, common characteristics were identified amongst previous lone-wolf terrorists. Recommendations for future potential preventative measures were explored based on the historical and current literature as well.

This thesis begins within chapter II, defining the core vocabulary surrounding lone-wolf terrorism and, creating a profile of common characteristics of each specific type of lone-wolf terrorist. The definition of a lone-wolf terrorist depends on the radicalization process and the steps taken thereafter. This chapter was made to set the groundwork for further discussions to be had with a standard understanding of the basic terms and the generalized statistics and facts in the background of a lone-wolf terror attack.

The first definitions to be explored are those that have transformed with modern-day terror, including but not limited to: terrorist, lone-wolf, terror groups, recruitment, and the differentiation amongst connected and inspired attacks. These terms must be defined to keep a standard groundwork of understanding when discussing the topics laid out in this thesis further.

Without standardized terms and definitions, a reader could go into the discussions with preconceived notions, non-specific understandings, and a lack of background on the topics covered. There are multiple variations amongst the definition of a true lone-wolf terrorist. However, analysis of case studies, identification of action patterns, and study of motive and intent can lead to a concise definition of lone-wolf terrorism, and thus, establish common profiles amongst individuals.

Chapter III seeks to demonstrate that studying past acts of lone-wolf terror is essential to scaffolding upon previous insight, investigational gains and thus, preventing future attacks. Chapter III centralizes the idea of lone-wolf terrorism by assessing the radicalization process of historically significant lone-wolf terrorist attacks which occurred on American soil. Throughout this chapter, several case studies are reviewed to establish patterns in the radicalization process, comparative cognitive and behavioral traits as well as intention and motivation of the attacks. When analyzing the previous notions of terrorism, the profile of a lone-wolf terrorist often negates the generalized representation of what would be that most average perpetrator.

Following the case study review, a statistical and historical understanding of lone-wolf terror attacks in the US during modern times is established. These facts and statistics cover a wide range of topics from targets, inspirations, demographics, and mental health profiles. These attacks happen relatively often and are usually not found on national news or spread widely on social media. This is partially due to the impact many of these attacks have been localized and, could be due in part to the definitions that the national news system has used to identify and cover lone-wolf attacks.

Following analysis of historical case studies and throughout chapter IV, the ideas surrounding the rationalization process are discussed. Chapter IV primarily centralizes on the digital aspect of the modern terrorism recruitment process and will cover topics such as: who is targeted, how they are primed for radicalization, what steps do recruiters take, and where there are shortfalls in the investigation apprehension and prevention of radicalization online. This has changed drastically throughout the modern era, as the introduction of the internet has exponentially grown the recruitment and radicalization rates and accessibility.⁶

The issue of digital radicalization is specifically important to the topic of lone-wolf terrorism because, without the internet, people would widely be radicalized by either people they know or self-radicalization. However, with the internet available to terror groups and future potential terrorists, it is now easier than ever for potentially increasingly radicalized individuals to find people who feel the same as they do.⁷

To follow that, the sharing of information has allowed those who are radicalized to take action with ease. The technology that can become available to these lone wolves can be extremely deadly and all because of the ease in the transfer of information online. A troubled person can go from not liking those around them to being radicalized and taught how to build a bomb over a very short period. This conclusion, along with many others will paint a picture of a deadly issue that has its major loopholes for enforcement and investigations.

The evolution of communication practices online has tremendously impacted the rate and means of radicalization for international terror groups. Often, radicalization is seen in online

⁶ Frissen, Thomas. "Internet, the Great Radicalizer? Exploring Relationships between Seeking for Online Extremist Materials and Cognitive Radicalization in Young Adults."., 1

⁷ Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Audrey Alexander, and Nick Kaderbhai. 2017. "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment."., 1234

chatrooms or social media groups. This is due to the anonymity of chat rooms, in conjunction with the connectedness of interacting with like-minded individuals. Those at risk for extreme radicalization are more willing to ask questions, share thoughts and engage in deep conversation with the anonymous nature that chat rooms allow for.

Much as the radicalization process has transformed throughout the modern era, the law enforcement response has been adaptive. Law enforcement has introduced meta-data analysis to better track potential threats, identify individuals seeking out radicalized materials, and engaging in conversations with online terror recruiters. To overview chapter IV, the internet has had a tremendous impact on lone-wolf terrorism with regard to prevention and apprehension. However, the progression of modern-day technology has also allowed for exponential growth in radicalization.

Chapter II:

Lone-Wolf Terrorism:

The Misconceptions, Theories, and Definitions

Executive Summary

There are two major types of lone terror threats: the terrorists with a network of organized terror behind them and true self-radicalized, untrained combatants. Given this information and knowledge, how could counter-terror efforts be adjusted to better address these two encampments, and what steps can be taken to identify and label such threats better? Lone-wolf terrorism is often mislabeled as a lone gunman, school shooter, or mass murderer. This analysis aims to better define lone-wolf terrorism and the terms associated with it, while also exploring the meanings of terms such as “terror network supported,” “terror organization inspired” and “self-radicalized”. Furthermore, this analysis will explore the tactics used by groups associated with these terms and attempt to produce an analysis that could both aid in identifying these threats and create profiles for people to be put into.

There are multiple variations amongst the definition of a true lone-wolf terrorist. However, analysis of case studies, identification of action patterns, and study of motive and intent can lead to a concise definition of lone-wolf terrorism, and thus, establish common profiles amongst individuals.

Introduction and Defining Terrorism

The definition of terrorism can be a debated topic with several different viewpoints. Points of contention arise when trying to formulate an explicit definition of constitutes terrorism and when an individual is considered a terrorist. The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines domestic terrorism in this way, “violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.”⁸ This supports that the rationale behind an attack must be stemming from ideological implications. Attacks with ideological motivations can take various forms, however, those who aim to make social or political change are considered terrorism, as defined by the FBI.⁹

With this definition accepted as standard, it is imperative to explore the term “lone-wolf terrorist.” Civilians may assume it is a terrorist who is acting alone, however, further clarification is necessary to differentiate individual terrorists from lone-wolf terrorists. The paper, *Loners, Colleagues, or Peers? Assessing the Social Organization of Radicalization* offers insight into this topic. Three distinct variations of lone-wolf terrorists can be identified. First, an individual who is self-radicalized, self-organized, and acts completely alone can be categorized as a “loner”¹⁰ The loner has no co-conspirators or people to train them. Secondly, the classification of “colleagues” is given to those who work closely with others, often via the internet to develop

⁸ FBI “Terrorism.”

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Holt, Thomas J., Joshua D. Freilich, Steven M. Chermak, Colleen Mills, and Jason Silva, *Loners, Colleagues, or Peers? Assessing the Social Organization of Radicalization*

plans and share knowledge.¹¹ Lone-wolf terrorists classified as “colleagues” frequently lack organizational skills but demonstrate strength in structure when compared to the “loner” classification. Lastly, those who are genuine, active members of established terror organizations, but choose to work alone are classified as “peers”.¹² When compared to “loner” or “colleague” terrorists, these individuals often receive formal training and are likely to be well organized, and have structure. Nevertheless, one could argue that the “peer” is not necessarily a lone-wolf terrorist. The training and support they receive from their organization make them comparable to a terrorist who happens to be working alone while conducting an attack. The individuals who have the training and outside support are far more prepared than their true lone-wolf terror counterparts. However, they are on this list because they do act alone in an attack.

Given the aforementioned definitions, the profile of a lone-wolf terrorist can be formulated. A lone-wolf terrorist is an individual who commits or has plans to commit an act of terrorism with the full intention of acting alone. Even with the support and training of a larger organization, an individual attempting or perpetrating an act of terrorism would be considered a “lone-wolf” terrorist. This may seem odd but, when a terrorist is acting alone they are a type of lone-wolf terrorist. While this goes against conventional thought on the topic, one example is: a man who reaches out to a terror organization because they would like to commit an act of terror. He receives information about potential targets, ways in which to commit the act itself, and all of the training necessary to be successful in their intentions. If they then goes on to act alone he is still a lone-wolf terrorist because he is acting without others or direct leadership.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹²Holt, Thomas J., Joshua D. Freilich, Steven M. Chermak, Colleen Mills, and Jason Silva, *Loners, Colleagues, or Peers? Assessing the Social Organization of Radicalization*

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The definition of a lone-wolf terrorist was expanded following the introduction of the Lone-Wolf Amendment following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.¹³ During these attacks, one terrorist, by the name of Moussaoui, could not be identified as a card-carrying member of any specific terror organization.¹⁴ However, influenced to act by way of sympathy with a terror group but not on their behalf. Thus, Moussaoui appeared to be acting as a lone-wolf, impacted by radicalized thoughts influenced by terror groups, but acting solely, without explicit standing structures in place.¹⁵

Following the prosecution of Moussaoui, the definition of lone-wolf terrorism was expanded to include, “any non-U.S. person who engages in international terrorism or activities in preparation therefore.”¹⁶ Previously, a demonstration of explicit connections to terror organizations was an essential component to the definition of lone-wolf terror.¹⁷ However, since incorporating the Lone Wolf Amendment into law, the definition has since been broadened to include individuals similar to Moussaoui, eliminating the components of the definition related to foreign terror organization affiliation.¹⁸

¹³ Bellia, Patricia. “The Lone Wolf Amendment and the Future of Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Law.” digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu, 2005., 425-428

¹⁴ Ibid., 426-427

¹⁵ Ibid., 426-427

¹⁶ Ibid., 426-427

¹⁷ Ibid., 427

¹⁸ Ibid., 426-427

In regards to the definition of lone-wolf terrorism as it relates to international terrorism, where the distinction is important is when it relates to surveillance. The FISA includes a distinction of what an “agent of a foreign power” is and that it is lawful for intelligence agencies to conduct surveillance on such subjects that meet the strict scrutiny of that definition.¹⁹ This legal definition can be expanded to include subjects that may not necessarily meet the definition of a foreign actor but do not fit into the box of domestic terrorist as the FBI has defined.²⁰

The Profile of a Lone-Wolf Terrorist

Further development and exploration into the profile of a terrorist is needed to gain a better understanding of these individuals. This will allow law enforcement to formulate a better understanding of who a suspect may be in regard to a lone-wolf attack. To demonstrate this point, when encountering an act of terror, the suspect evades police, however, they are still known to be within the vicinity. The police establish roadblocks and begin to check cars and pedestrians. If an officer is going into the situation blind, they would stop every person, thus conducting an inefficient and time-consuming search. However, if a profile of the suspect is developed, the logistics of the search effort would be more efficient and effective.

In an effort to develop an informed profile of a lone-wolf terrorist, the information that will be used are statistics from a comprehensive report written by the Federal Bureau of Investigations studying the characteristics of a lone-wolf terrorist. The study focuses on the following characteristics: gender, age, race, citizenship status, education, religious affiliation, mental health, and substance abuse. Establishing a profile can benefit many people with preconceived notions of lone-wolf terrorists. This study used an aggregated system of all lone-

¹⁹ Ibid., 426-427

²⁰ “Terrorism.” FBI. FBI, May 3, 2016. <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>.

wolf terror attacks within the US between 1972 and 2015.²¹ Those included in the study conducted by the FBI were selected because they were determined to have committed a lone act of terror within the US.²² These terrorists could have been helped by terror organizations but, as defined by the FBI, although a terrorist may have support and training from a larger organization does not mean they are not, in fact, a lone-wolf terrorist.²³ The information will be compiling and utilizing demographic statistics from the generalized American population to compare to each grouping the FBI offers.

For the fifty-two individuals within the study, FBI determined that all offenders were men.²⁴ In comparison, ~49.2% of the US population are men²⁵ With regard to the age of terrorists, the FBI has stated that the average age of a lone-wolf terrorist is approximately 26 years old.²⁶ The average age among Americans is ~38 years old, which supports a notable difference when comparing the average age amongst lone-wolf terrorists and the general population.²⁷

Next, the study analyzes the racial and citizenship status of fifty-two individuals. For citizenship, 90% of lone-wolf terrorists were born within the United States.²⁸ This is compared to the 86% of Americans who were born within the United States²⁹. In terms of racial statistics, approximately 60% of the attackers were white with the next largest grouping being Middle Eastern. The remaining racial groups have relatively low counts of lone-wolf actors.³⁰ Compared

²¹ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 1-30.

²² Ibid., 10.

²³ Ibid., 10.

²⁴ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 12.

²⁵ Census Bureau QuickFacts

²⁶ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 12.

²⁷ Duffin, Erin. "Median Age of the U.S. Population 1960-2018."

²⁸ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 14.

²⁹ "The Foreign-Born Population in the United States." www.census.gov

³⁰ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 14.

to the statistics offered by the US Census, ~76% of Americans are white, while Asians (Middle Eastern people are included as an aggregate) are represented by 5.9% of the general population.³¹ The education statistics of lone-wolf terrorists showed the majority of those studied had at least their associate's degree, but, 37% of the terrorists had at least their bachelor's degree with 14% having their master's or doctoral degree.³² This, compared to the generalized US population where around ~31% had at least a bachelor's degree.³³

The FBI study also analyzed religious affiliation, determining that 50% of all studied being affiliated with Christianity with Islam being the next largest grouping at 35%.³⁴ Approximately 37% of those in the study were affiliated with the military, most of those being members of the Army.³⁵ This shows a stark difference from the rest of the American population ~70% of Americans identify with some kind of Christianity while only ~0.9% of Americans identify with a kind of Islam.³⁶

The psychiatric profile, regarding diagnosis, of these individuals, is notably low. Of all lone-wolf terrorists, 25% have a mental health diagnosis and of that 25%, only 38% were receiving professional treatment for their diagnosis.³⁷ An argument that is often made regarding lone-wolf terrorism is that it is a mental health issue rather than a political or religious one. Now, an argument can be made that those who were not diagnosed were in a situation where they were unable to receive a diagnosis. According to Johns Hopkins University Medicine, 25% of Americans have a diagnosable mental health disorder.³⁸ This suggests that the group of people in

³¹ Census Bureau QuickFacts

³² FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 16.

³³ Census Bureau QuickFacts

³⁴ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 17.

³⁵ Ibid., 17.

³⁶ Pew Research, "Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics, and Statistics."

³⁷ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 22.

³⁸ Johns Hopkins Medicine, "Mental Health Disorder Statistics."

the study are not abnormal when it comes to the mental health statistics within America. In post, family members and mental health professionals had determined that several other members of the study are believed to have a mental health disorder which would potentially bring the total number to around 63% when including unofficial diagnoses and postmortem speculation about the subjects.³⁹ In addition to their mental health concerns, around half of all lone-wolf terrorists had some form of substance abuse before their attacks. Furthermore, 44% of attackers had a history of hard drug use including but not limited to Methamphetamine, LSD, Cocaine, and Ecstasy.⁴⁰

So, now a profile has been developed containing a list of characteristics officers can keep in mind when identifying a person involved in lone-wolf terrorism. Presumably, they are between the ages of 20-30, most likely white, male, display possible signs of drug use, and are possibly ex-military. Utilizing this profile will allow an officer to focus on suspects that fit this description, thus narrowing their search down to a few likely suspects. Relying on a terrorist profile supported by evidence is essential within law enforcement as it allows for the identification of a suspect efficiently which can save lives and time following an incident.

Typology of Leadership Within Lone-Wolf Terrorism

Terror networks are utilized by terror groups and many lone-wolf terrorists to spread hate, help radicalize, share their message, and organize acts of violence. These terror networks attempt to give structure to the members within and, in doing so, help organize the efforts of members to maximize their effect. These effects can be magnified by leadership and training networks within these terror organizations.⁴¹ It will be explored, through research, the ways in

³⁹ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 23.

⁴⁰ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 26.

⁴¹ Combs, Cynthia. Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century, 368-371.

which terror groups radicalize, train, and recruit would-be lone-wolf terrorism and, explore the fascinating section of lone-wolf terrorism that lacks training or the support of terror networks.

Within radicalization, there are several ways an organization can initiate communication and influence someone. Additionally, there are many ways in which a person can self-radicalize. According to Cynthia Combs in *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, there are several different ways a person can take up with a terror group.⁴² She says, “there is no single catalyst for being involved in a group. Often the desire to belong to a group and to socialize may prompt an individual to become involved.”⁴³

Analyzing groups like The Islamic State and how they quickly turn unaffiliated citizens into terrorists can facilitate a deeper understanding of the recruitment process. The Islamic State is known to take members of the general public and radicalize them rather quickly.⁴⁴ As said in the Combs book, people tend to want something different, a group to be a part of and support their ideology.^{45,46} The recent development of accessible internet has allowed terror groups to efficiently weaponize normal digital communication targeting vulnerable groups of people in an attempt to radicalize them.⁴⁷ The Islamic State became professionals at taking what is said in holy books associated with Islam and making that information fit their narrative that The United States and the western world had been unjustifiably invading their land and killing their people.⁴⁸ As a former Islamic State recruiter said in a New York Times interview, once an individual joins a conversation for the second time, the recruiter knows that they have them ‘on the hook.’ The

⁴² Ibid., 368-371

⁴³ Combs, Cynthia. *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, 369.

⁴⁴ Callimachi, Rukmini. “Caliphate: Chapter 2, ‘Recruitment’”. 4m00s

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6m-8m

⁴⁶ Combs, Cynthia. *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, 368-371.

⁴⁷ Callimachi, Rukmini. “Caliphate: Chapter 2, ‘Recruitment’”. 7m-8m

⁴⁸ Ibid., 10m-11m

recruiter knows that once they return to initiate further communication, they can be radicalized.⁴⁹ During these early stages in recruitment, the conversations and signs of radicalization when a group is involved the lone actor tends to not be careful; this could be a lack of training on their part because once the radicalization has started the conversations quickly move to more covert means.⁵⁰

Threat Assessment

Within the United States, the three primary motivators for lone-wolf terrorism are anti-government, violent extremism, and radical Islam.⁵¹ Assessing these three major reasons for attacking it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of their ideological motivations and the targets of the attacks. The Department of Homeland Security specifies the targets of lone-wolf terrorism and the main motivations for attacking said targets while Homeland Security compares the findings with those from group-based terrorism. The largest percentages for the motivations behind lone-wolf attacks are found in two major categories, abortion-related and anti-government.⁵²

For these lone actors, the demonstrated violence often can be classified into three distinct categories, two of which are far more prevalent than the rest. First, there are infrastructure-based attacks, which account for approximately 49% of all lone-wolf terror attacks.⁵³ Next are Bombings and explosives, which account for 36% of attacks within lone-wolf terror⁵⁴. The last mode of attacking that has statistical significance is armed violence, including shootings when

⁴⁹ Ibid., 10m-11m

⁵⁰ Zeman, Tomáš, Jan Břeň, and Rudolf Urban. "Role of Internet in Lone-Wolf Terrorism."

⁵¹ FBI, "Lone Offender Terrorism Report.", 33.

⁵² US Department of Homeland Security. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 10

⁵³ Ibid., 10, 11

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11

considered terrorism and when the person in question is acting alone, which accounts for around 9% of all lone-wolf terror attacks.⁵⁵

Case Studies

The following are case studies that showcase the fine line between operative and lone-wolf terrorist. This is done to prove the concept that a lone-wolf terrorist can be inspired, trained and directed by terror networks and still be considered lone-wolves. The following will prove that concept while also highlighting some of the strengths of al-Qaeda as a component of lone-wolf terrorism.

Nidal Malik Hasan

On November 5, 2009, Dr. Nidal Malik Hasan a Major in the U.S. Army had entered Fort Hood and gunned down 13 people and injured an additional 42 others.⁵⁶ Dr. Hasan was a U.S. Army physician who was due to be deployed to Afghanistan in October, one month after the attack.⁵⁷ Dr. Hassan had open communications with a known terrorist and so-called cleric Anwar al-Awlaki.⁵⁸ At the time of the attack on Fort Hood, al-Awlaki was the number two most wanted terrorist by U.S. authorities.⁵⁹ Their communications included details and discussions on the justification of attacks and tactics, the exact details of the attack that Dr. Hassan would end up perpetrating.⁶⁰

The attack on Fort Hood shows the ability for an individual to be self-radicalized with the support and coercion of outside actors. Though Dr. Hasan did have connections to a known

⁵⁵ Ibid., 11

⁵⁶ LESSONS FROM FORT HOOD: IMPROVING OUR ABILITY TO CONNECT THE DOTS., 112th Congress

⁵⁷ Olsson, Peter A.. Making of a Homegrown Terrorist : Brainwashing Rebels in Search of a Cause., 50

⁵⁸ LESSONS FROM FORT HOOD: IMPROVING OUR ABILITY TO CONNECT THE DOTS., 112th Congress

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

terrorist, Anwar al-Awlaki; he still acted alone and is considered a lone-wolf terrorist.⁶¹ This example provides a clear cut lone-wolf attack that was inspired by the ideology being pushed by outside actors. Though Dr. Hassan had connections to major terror actors, he had committed the act alone, not as a soldier of a terror group, but as an individual. An individual who had believed his actions would be praised and held up as actions of glory and be hailed as a martyr.

Naser Jason Abdo

Following the Dr. Hassan shooting in 2009, in 2012 there was another terror incident in the Fort Hood area.⁶² Private Naser Jason Abdo had planned to plant a bomb in a restaurant in the Fort Hood area that is frequented by U.S. Army personnel, once the bomb went off he had planned to shoot all of the survivors. The plan was thwarted by law enforcement but, in a subsequent hearing, Abdo had spoken fondly of Dr. Hasan and his messaging.⁶³

Abdo had attempted to claim conscientious objector status to avoid a tour of duty in the Middle East but this status had been delayed due to pending charges.⁶⁴ The plot was found to be inspired by both Dr. Hasan and, al-Qaeda's online publication entitled "make a bomb in your mom's kitchen".⁶⁵ There are many connections between Abdo's planned attack and the Dr. Hasan attack though, not directly planned in tandem, and the two had no formal connection to one another.

Jose Pimentel (Muhammad Yusuf)

Another plot that was stopped before it came to fruition is the 2011 case of Jose Pimentel, or Muhammad Yusuf. Yusuf had plotted to kill members of the military who were returning

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Olsson, Peter A.. Making of a Homegrown Terrorist : Brainwashing Rebels in Search of a Cause., 50

⁶³ "Naser Jason Abdo Sentenced to Life in Federal Prison in Connection with Killeen Bomb Plot."

⁶⁴ Olsson, Peter A.. Making of a Homegrown Terrorist : Brainwashing Rebels in Search of a Cause., 54-55

⁶⁵ Ibid., 55

home from Afghanistan.⁶⁶ He was radicalized by propaganda releases by al-Qaeda and had been heavily influenced by Anwar al-Awlaki, much like the other two cases that have been reviewed.⁶⁷ Yusuf had planned a series of bombings, choosing targets such as public transit, post offices and, police stations.⁶⁸ These targets and the weaponry used were planned using online media posted by al-Qaeda in the English magazine, Inspire.⁶⁹ This is the same magazine used by several other terrorists in the US, including the Tsarnaev brothers in their attack on the Boston Marathon in 2013.⁷⁰ Yousuf was apprehended prior to any action taken on the plot to bomb the locations selected; during the investigation, which included a year of surveillance, law enforcement made the connection that Yusef was inspired and was receiving resources from al-Qaeda.⁷¹

Adel Daoud

Adel Daoud, is another case that has direct connection to al-Qaeda but attempted to act alone.⁷² Daoud, a Chicago native and, particularly young, only 18 at the time of his arrest in 2012.⁷³ The Daoud case begins much like the others covered, Daoud had researched al-Qaeda and their writings and had landed on the teachings of Anwar al-Awlaki.⁷⁴ He went further by reaching out to, what he thought at the time, was an al-Qaeda operative in his region.⁷⁵ This al-Qaeda operative was actually an undercover FBI agent who had been in communication with

⁶⁶ Al Qaeda Inspired New York Resident Arrested on Terrorism Charges. "Library of Congress Web Archives."

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Valdmanis, Richard. "Boston Bomb Suspect Influenced by Al Qaeda: Expert Witness."

⁷¹ "Library of Congress Web Archives." Al Qaeda Inspired New York Resident Arrested on Terrorism Charges. Accessed

⁷² "Adel Daoud." Counter Extremism Project.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Daoud regarding al-Awlaki's work as well as more extreme ideas.⁷⁶ The conversations between the two quickly turned to targeting and weaponry.⁷⁷ Daoud had planned to bomb a bar in the Chicago area and had planned to get the explosives from the FBI agent who he believed was a al-Qaeda operative. Daoud had parked the car full of fake explosives in front of the bar and when he attempted to detonate the bomb, he was arrested.⁷⁸ The most recent update from the Daoud case is that in 2020, a federal appeals court determined that Daoud's sentence of 16 years was not long enough, so a new trial will be set in the near future.⁷⁹

Ahmad Khan Rahami

The last case that will be covered in this chapter is the case of Ahmad Khan Rahami, an Afghanistan born man turned terrorist in 2016.⁸⁰ Rahami differs from the other cases covered above because Rahami had traveled back and forth to Pakistan and Afghanistan during his radicalization and training.⁸¹ The other way in which Rahami differs from the others is that he carried out his plot to completion.⁸² Rahami had targeted several locations in New York and New Jersey, planting four bombs and leaving six others unarmed in a trash can on his escape.⁸³ Out of the four bombs that were planted and due to explode, two had gone off, one in the path of a Marine 5k charity run in Seaside New Jersey and the other, a very large weapon was exploded in the Chelsea district in New York City.⁸⁴ The first bomb, in New Jersey went off without injury due to the race starting late.⁸⁵ Though, the bomb that had been planted in Chelsea, had detonated

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ al-Anabi, Abu Ubaydah Yusuf. "Ahmad Khan Rahami." Counter Extremism Project.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

injuring 30 people and damaging several properties.⁸⁶ The other weapons were discovered and disposed of prior to their detonation.⁸⁷

The Rahami case has several key elements that in one sense make it distinctly different than the others but, in many ways, is quite similar. Much like the other lone-wolves covered previously, Rahami had gotten much of his inspiration from al-Qaeda and Anwar al-Awlaki.⁸⁸ Rahami had been reported several times by family members, who worried that Rahami had become radicalized.⁸⁹ They saw the warning signs but law enforcement did not follow Rahami's movements close enough to see the attack coming.⁹⁰

Review of the Case Studies

All of these examples have one key component in common, they all acted alone but had the support or inspiration from a large terror organization. This ties together all of the definitions and points that were set out in the beginning. Just because a terrorist or a would-be terrorist does not fully act alone, does not mean that they are not a lone-wolf. Those listed above had connections to terror networks and can even be trained by terror groups. Ultimately, these are self-radicalized, actors who had used the terror organizations for their resources and teachings. Every one of these terrorists had acted alone in their plots and had used the teachings of al-Qaeda and, more specifically, Anwar al-Awlaki. Anwar al-Awlaki was the most prolific recruiter for his sect of al-Qaeda and was a major inspiration for many modern terrorists, lone-wolves or others. In 2011, al-Awlaki was killed in a drone strike conducted by the CIA in Northern Yemen.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Stewart, Brian, Josh Lipowsky, and Abu Ubaydah Yusuf al-Anabi. "Anwar Al-Awlaki: The Modern Face of Terror."

Conclusion

Lone-wolf terrorism, although not a recently developed concept, is changing and adapting to the modern world. With advanced technologies and counter-terrorism efforts, the lone-wolf terrorist has become amongst the most effective ways in which a terror organization can operate.⁹² Due to the effectiveness of using lone-wolf terrorists, there has been an increase in recruitment and radicalization. Thus, the United States and other global nations must create counter-terrorism strategies which adapt to the changing nature of the digital age and increased presence of lone-wolf terror .^{93,94} Analyzing modern documented cases of lone-wolf terrorism allows for the development of a comprehensive profile of potential terrorists. Within this paper, it was discussed through research and analysis demographic details that give an overview of what a lone-wolf terrorist most likely will look like and what their background is. Within the next chapter, It will address the similarities between different lone-wolf terrorists and what can be taken away from those similarities. it will also be discussed also the potential legislative solutions to the question of lone-wolf terrorism.

⁹² Institute for Economics & Peace. “Global Terrorism Index, Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism .”, 59

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Michael, George, *Lone-Wolf Terror and the Rise of Leaderless Resistance*, 79

Chapter III:

Lone-Wolf Terrorism:

A Study of the Past, Tactics, and Solutions

Executive Summary

Analyzing the past has the potential to facilitate greater comprehension of future events. An exploration of the current literature was conducted to develop a better understanding of research within the field of lone-wolf terror. Through this research, the lone-wolf profile is characterized into four distinctive classifications, which allows for a deeper interpretation of motives and the process of radicalization. The application of this research is seen via a thorough investigation of three modern case studies within this chapter. Furthermore, the specific motives and tactics which were utilized will be examined to explore ways in which law enforcement could be more effective against these terrorists in the future. To prevent future acts of lone-wolf terror, it is essential to analyze past cases and determine patterns amongst strategies, motives, and profiles.

Introduction

Lessons from the past can be applied to better approach the future. As previously discussed, lone-wolf terrorism is a far greater threat than is represented in counter-terror efforts. Analyzing current research and literature, as well as exploring past events, such as the three case studies described below, will allow for the development of a deeper understanding of future events and thus increase preventative measures. Three distinctive case studies which could aid in facilitating this understanding are Timothy McVeigh, Dylann Roof, and Omar Mateen. These lone-wolf terrorists were chosen due to their differences in motive and tactics. The varying natures of these cases lend way to inclusive and comprehensive conclusions that are the aim of this work. Additionally, the selected aforementioned subjects allow for analysis of established research and meta-analysis which will aid in the research and development of a lone-wolf profile.

Lastly, an extensive exploration into law enforcement responses, the systematic approach to apprehension, and the progression of investigation of specific lone-wolf terror cases may lead to a better response in the future. This analysis that will be provided will offer insight into the question of if the lessons from the past are applicable to more modern lone-wolf terrorism prevention tactics. Furthermore, analysis of the terrorists, such as Timothy McVeigh, Dylann Roof, and Omar Mateen, can generate patterns of strategies, motives, and investigational approaches. The study of three vastly different cases will allow for useful insight into the attacks, investigations, and apprehension across various situational contexts. Studying past acts of lone-wolf terror is essential to scaffolding upon previous insight, investigational gains and thus, preventing future attacks.

Exploration of Lone-Wolf Definitions

The literary focus of this review can be designated into an exploration of definitions, tactics, and categorizing the terror suspects. The tactics, as stated, can either be the tactics used by the terrorists or, the counter-terror tactics employed to stop lone-wolves before the act. These reviews are imperative to the foundational understanding of this paper. . The analysis of research will aid in generating definitions and categorizations to determine which counter-terror methods may be most effective against some of America's most infamous lone-wolves.

Within Raffaello Pantucci's work, *A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists*, many of the topics that are covered in this thesis are touched upon. Throughout this work, Pantucci examines the definition of lone-wolf terrorists.⁹⁵ Pantucci stated four distinctive categories for lone-wolf terrorists: the loner, the lone-wolf, the lone-wolf pack, and the lone attacker.⁹⁶ These definitions facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the attackers many refer to as 'lone-wolves'. For instance, the loner attacker is the most disconnected when compared to the others described. Thus, they act completely alone with no influence or direction from others or groups.⁹⁷ The lone-wolf is comparative to the loner, however, they may have contact or be heavily influenced by extremist groups.⁹⁸ The lone-wolf pack refers to those who are self-radicalized.⁹⁹ Included within this group are those who rationalized friends or family against a group of people or spread anarchist ideologies that others will be willing to act on. Lastly, the title of lone attacker describes a single individual who is acting on direct orders by a

⁹⁵ Raffaello Pantucci. *A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists*. (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), 2011): 14-31.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 14-31

⁹⁷ Ibid., 14-31

⁹⁸ Ibid., 14-31

⁹⁹ Ibid., 14-31

group or coordinator.¹⁰⁰ These people usually have a connection to an extremist group and will be pushing a specific ideology.¹⁰¹

There are many reasons for an individual to commit a lone-wolf act, as demonstrated in *Dancing with the Wolves: Today's Lone-Wolf Terrorists* by Rodger A. Bates. In this report, Bates covers different reasonings for terror attacks and attempts to categorize all lone-wolf terrorists within a demonstrated model.¹⁰² This model, an eight pronged chart, places terrorists on a scale from self-radicalization to group radicalization on the X-axis, on the Y-axis is the motivation from self-interests to ideology pushing.¹⁰³ On the other two axes are the career terrorists to the chaos based ones and on the other is determining how planned a terror act is, from avoiding major risk to major risk taking.¹⁰⁴ This chart offers important insight into the determination of how a lone-wolf terrorist acts and how their actions fit in among others who fit into the category of lone-wolf terrorist.¹⁰⁵

Within the work *A Response to 'Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone-Wolf Terrorism* by Michael Becker, he responds to an article used within this thesis to highlight the ambiguity of the definitions behind lone-wolf terrorist.¹⁰⁶ The definitions targeted for this criticism is not just the lone-wolf terrorist distinction but, terrorism as a whole.¹⁰⁷ Becher argues that there is no agreed upon definition of lone-wolf terrorist and that there is still no universal definition of terrorist.¹⁰⁸ Becker examines and lends way to further questions as to who the lone-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 14-31

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 14-31

¹⁰² Bates, Rodger A. "Dancing with Wolves: Today's Lone-Wolf Terrorists." *Journal of Public and Professional Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2012): 1-15.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1-15

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1-15

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 1-15

¹⁰⁶ "A Response to 'Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone-Wolf Terrorism.'" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 5 (2016): 472-476.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 472-476

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 472-476

wolf terrorist is and how to approach the growing issue. According to this article, regardless of what that definition is, it could be wrong or at least heavily questioned.¹⁰⁹ What this article highlights in particular is that there is still a debate into the definitions of terrorism and lone-wolf terrorism, both of which are at the core of this thesis.¹¹⁰

In Edwin Bakker's *Perspectives on terrorism: Preventing Lone-Wolf Terrorism* Bakker recognizes that there is a lack of a profile for a lone-wolf terrorist and, that there are categories that these terrorists can be put in.¹¹¹ Bakker explains that as of 2011, the rise of lone-wolf attack in the US is due in part by the rise of the extreme rightwing groups that offer radical ideologies to their members.¹¹² Another point made, is the consistent presence of Islamist circles which produce terrorists, which has been relatively consistent.¹¹³ Bakker also reviews the potential counter-terror response. As previously demonstrated, one productive approach to analyzing lone-wolf counter-terrorism is through the communications used.¹¹⁴ Catching the communication between the potential terrorist and the person or group that they communicate with is critical to countering such attacks.¹¹⁵ Bakker also recognizes that even with the best counter terror measures, the issue of lone-wolf terrorism will not be solved.¹¹⁶

Methodology

The base of this paper will be based on three case studies of lone-wolf terrorists within the United States. Case studies will be utilized because they can provide context and insight into

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 472-476

¹¹⁰ "A Response to 'Key Issues and Research Agendas in Lone-Wolf Terrorism.'" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 5 (2016): 472-476.

¹¹¹ Bakker, Edwin and Beatrice de Graaf. "Preventing Lone-Wolf Terrorism: Some CT Approaches Addressed." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 5-6 (December, 2011): 43-50.

¹¹² Ibid., 43-50

¹¹³ Ibid., 43-50

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 43-50

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 43-50

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 43-50

real-life examples of tactics of both the terrorists and law enforcement.¹¹⁷ This will provide the opportunity to analyze practical and theory based answers to questions surrounding topics within lone-wolf terrorism.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, a particular emphasis will be placed upon the investigations that followed the terror incident, which will grant valuable insight into the ways in which law enforcement have approached the lone-wolf issue in the past. Each case study will have a form of the following questions: why did they do the attack; what tactics did they employ; law enforcement response/investigations; and a formal analysis.

The culmination of all of this information paired with the other terror profiles that will be created in this thesis will aid in the discussions on counter-terror tactics. These three major terror incidents are all distinctly different with regard to motives, tactics and outcomes. This is why the decision was made to include these three for an analysis into the American lone-wolf terrorist. Another key area considered is the time period of the attacks. Both the Roof and Mateen attacks were in the last ten years while the McVeigh attack was more than twenty five years ago. This is an important point to keep in mind because, since 1995, tactics and counter terrorism has changed quite a bit. Even with that, there are still valuable lessons to be learned from the McVeigh attack and the attack offers modern investigatory applications.

A particular concentration will be placed on the Roof and Mateen attacks, as these are two modern attacks that needed more detail and context than what most people have. The Roof attack offered helpful insight into the investigations and apprehension of a suspect post attack. While the Mateen attack shows a different use of strategies and a lack of apprehension. The

¹¹⁷ Ebneyamini, Shiva, and Mohammad Reza Sadeghi Moghadam. "Toward Developing a Framework for Conducting Case Study Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*

¹¹⁸ Ebneyamini, Shiva, and Mohammad Reza Sadeghi Moghadam. "Toward Developing a Framework for Conducting Case Study Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*

ending of the Mateen attack is what counter terror teams attempt to avoid because it leaves a lot of unanswered questions and leaves possible threats still on the table.

Timothy McVeigh and The Oklahoma City Bombing

Known Motive

On April 19th, 1995, Timothy McVeigh committed an act of terrorism that took the lives of 168 people.^{119,120} This act of terrorism is referred to as the Oklahoma City Bombing.

McVeigh has several co-conspirators but had introduced the ideas and committed the act alone.¹²¹ McVeigh was not directly associated with any political group but had expressed anti-federal government sentiment as his reasoning for the attack.¹²² April 19th had been the date that McVeigh had chosen due to the fact that April 19th was the date of the end of the Waco, Texas incident.¹²³ The other reason McVeigh saw significance in that date was that an execution was scheduled for a terrorist who had targeted the same building that McVeigh was targeting.¹²⁴

Tactics, Methods, and Targets

Timothy McVeigh had chosen his target and, the way in which he wanted to commit his act of terror, all that was left was the materials for the act.¹²⁵ The explosives were described by the Federal Bureau of Investigations as “a deadly cocktail of agricultural fertilizer, diesel fuel, and other chemicals.”¹²⁶ The bomb itself was reportedly made of ~4,800 pounds of ammonium nitrate and diesel fuel.¹²⁷ The building that was targeted by McVeigh was the Alfred P. Murrah

¹¹⁹ Linder, Douglas. *The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh.*, 7

¹²⁰ “Oklahoma City Bombing.” FBI

¹²¹ Linder, Douglas. *The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh.*, 7-8

¹²² Ibid., 7

¹²³ Ibid., 7

¹²⁴ Ibid., 7

¹²⁵ Ibid., 7

¹²⁶ “Oklahoma City Bombing.” FBI

¹²⁷ Press, Associated. “A Look at Some Deadly Explosions Involving Ammonium Nitrate.” WSLs.

Federal Building, this building was chosen due to McVeigh's hatred of the federal government and the previous plot to bomb said building from other terrorists.^{128,129} The Oklahoma City Bombing was the terror attack with the most fatalities in the US prior to September 11, 2001.¹³⁰

Apprehension

Timothy McVeigh was caught in an unconventional way, when the FBI and other law enforcement had honed in on their search for McVeigh while he was already in jail due to a traffic stop shortly after the bombing.¹³¹ He was arrested for illegally possessing a firearm and was reportedly close to being released from the jail when law enforcement narrowed their search to McVeigh being their prime suspect.¹³²

Law enforcement came to the conclusion that McVeigh was their suspect in a traditional manner. Law enforcement took personal accounts of seeing the suspect leave the truck at the Murrah Building and continued their search by utilizing the FBI behavioral investigations tactics to determine that McVeigh was former/current military, white, relatively young and possibly a member of a militia group.¹³³ The profile built and the descriptions given gave the FBI the opportunity to make the description public to see if the public could aid in identifying the suspect.¹³⁴ Two people who aided in the identification of Timothy McVeigh are the manager of the motel he had been staying at for several nights prior to the attack, and a former coworker who had identified him via a picture.¹³⁵ When McVeigh was approached by lawyers and

¹²⁸ "Oklahoma City Bombing." FBI

¹²⁹ Linder, Douglas. *The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh.*, 7-8

¹³⁰ "Oklahoma City Bombing." FBI

¹³¹ History.com, Editors of. "Oklahoma City Bombing." History.com.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Linder, Douglas. *The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Trial of Timothy McVeigh.*, 7-9

¹³⁴ Ibid., 8-9

¹³⁵ Ibid., 7-9

questioned about the bombing, he admitted to the bombing.¹³⁶ Once identified, McVeigh's associates were also quickly identified and, with further investigation of their homes, direct links between McVeigh and the bombing were discovered.¹³⁷

What We Learned From The Attack

A major impact from the McVeigh attack was the impact of evidence collection done by the FBI.¹³⁸ This one investigation had many investigators, "more than 1,400" according to the FBI.¹³⁹ The evidence the FBI had collected was in the literal tons, so it was a lot to work with but also, rather difficult to figure out what was actually important to the investigation of who had done the bombing.¹⁴⁰ This is where one piece of clever evidence had come into play, the rear axle of the Ryder rental truck McVeigh had used.¹⁴¹ This axle had the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) affixed to part of it.¹⁴² This had allowed the investigators to go through the DMV to determine ownership and a description of the truck.¹⁴³ This brought the investigators to the rental shop where they got a description and the name of McVeigh.¹⁴⁴

To continue the investigation, the FBI had conducted over 28,000 interviews with a search of millions of hotel guest registrations, airline registrations and rental truck records.¹⁴⁵ This investigation had encompassed all of the FBI's resources at the time and had come to who their suspect was within a very short period of time, around a day.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁶ Ibid., 9

¹³⁷ Ibid., 9

¹³⁸ "The Oklahoma City Bombing: 25 Years Later." FBI.

¹³⁹ "The Oklahoma City Bombing: 25 Years Later." FBI.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ "Oklahoma City Bombing Fast Facts." CNN. Cable News Network

This exercise in the FBI's power had offered a successful trial and execution of McVeigh.¹⁴⁷ Without the evidence and groundwork that was put into this case, the bombing may have taken far longer to solve or to prosecute. One important aspect of the Oklahoma City Bombing is that even without modern tracking and surveillance, the FBI was still efficient enough to catch McVeigh quickly. Technology is not essential to determine and track a criminal, though it may seem that way for 'random' acts of terror such as this one. McVeigh was given the charges of eleven counts of murder, and conspiracy of using a weapon of mass destruction.¹⁴⁸ The judge had handed down a death sentence that had followed through, June of 2001.¹⁴⁹ The McVeigh terror attack offered a plethora of knowledge when it comes to the investigation of bombings, and tracking suspects of seemingly random acts of terror both have applicable uses within modern investigations.

The most important takeaway from the McVeigh attack was the efficiency of the investigators and law enforcement. Although it was 1995 and the US had no modern terror incidents that were to this scale, the investigators were able to track McVeigh as the perpetrator in relatively little time. The investigators were able to go through bulk deposits of records to link McVeigh to the crime even though at that point they were just trying to find the suspect, not build a perfect case.

Dylann Roof, Charleston Church Shooting

Known Motive

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ "Oklahoma City Bombing Fast Facts." CNN. Cable News Network

On June 17th, 2015, Dylann Roof committed an act of terror at a traditionally black church located in Charleston, South Carolina.^{150,151} Roof's intentions were made clear by his announcement prior to his shooting; when he reportedly said he was there "to shoot black people" and continued by saying "Y'all are raping our women and taking over the country. This must be done."¹⁵² Roof continues to explain why he committed the act of terror by proclaiming that it was an attempt to start a "race war"¹⁵³

To further the reasoning of his act, Dylann Roof had created a manifesto in support of white supremacy in the United States.¹⁵⁴ The church itself was selected due to its historical importance to slave rebellions and the civil rights movement, in fact the date of the attack corresponded with a famous slave rebellion that involved the church.¹⁵⁵ These details were made clear by the manifesto he had written prior to the attack.¹⁵⁶

Tactics, Methods, and Targets

It was reported that Dylann Roof had used a Glock semi-automatic .45 caliber pistol to carry out the shooting.¹⁵⁷ Roof told an officer after the shooting the reason he had used that weapon was due to his inability to afford a larger weapon.¹⁵⁸ Roof reportedly spent around an hour within the church participating in a bible study with the partitioners.¹⁵⁹ After the hour spent with the partitioners of the church Roof had made his proclamations and began shooting, he

¹⁵⁰ NORRIS, JESSE J. "Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters." *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54, no. 1 (January 2017)., 502-503

¹⁵¹ Gambino, Lauren, and Nadia Khomami. "Charleston Church Shooting: 21-Year-Old Suspect Captured

¹⁵² NORRIS, JESSE J. "Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters." *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54, no. 1 (January 2017)., 502

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 502-503

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 503

¹⁵⁵ NORRIS, JESSE J. "Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters." *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54, no. 1 (January 2017)., 503

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 503

¹⁵⁷ Brumfield, Ben. "Charleston Shooter Dylann Roof Wanted an AR-15, Had Magazines."

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

ultimately killed nine of the church goers.^{160,161} Allegedly, when Roof concluded his terror act, he had attempted to kill himself with a self-inflicted gunshot but had run out of ammunition.¹⁶² One parishioner was quoted saying, “his plan was never to leave that church”¹⁶³.

The Apprehension and Trial of Dylann Roof

The investigations very quickly led to Dylann Roof being the prime suspect in the shooting, he was identified and a warrant was issued for his arrest.^{164,165} The morning after the shooting, Roof was pulled over in North Carolina, approximately 250 miles from the church.^{166,167} When apprehended, without incident, the firearm used in the shooting was discovered unhidden within Roof’s vehicle.¹⁶⁸

After he was arrested there was large debate on whether the attack ought to be considered a hate crime or an act of domestic terrorism. The FBI director at the time of charging had said that as of that point there was nothing necessarily linking Roof’s actions being politically motivated.¹⁶⁹ Though the claim is made “the attack unambiguously fits the FBI’s and USA Patriot Act’s definition of domestic terrorism”¹⁷⁰

What We Learned from The Attack

¹⁶⁰ NORRIS, JESSE J. “Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters.” *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54, no. 1 (January 2017)., 503

¹⁶¹ Brumfield, Ben. “Charleston Shooter Dylann Roof Wanted an AR-15, Had Magazines.”

¹⁶² Phelps, Timothy. “Dylann Roof Tried to Kill Himself during Attack, Victim's Son Says.”

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ball, Edward. “United States v. Dylann Roof.” *The New York Review of Books*, 2017.

¹⁶⁵ NORRIS, JESSE J. “Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters.” *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54, no. 1 (January 2017)., 502-503

¹⁶⁶ NORRIS, JESSE J. “Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters.” *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54, no. 1 (January 2017)., 502-503

¹⁶⁷ Ball, Edward. “United States v. Dylann Roof.” *The New York Review of Books*, 2017.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ NORRIS, JESSE J. “Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters.” *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54, no. 1 (January 2017)., 503

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 504

One major take away at the time was a realization that race based terrorism was still very much alive within the US. This realization has led to more investigations into instances such as the string of arson attacks against traditionally black churches in the south.¹⁷¹ This came only a month after the Roof shooting had taken place. Without the attention to race based terrorism acts like these would most likely be kept in the local news media but, with the attention brought to the issue, the nation had seen what was happening.

Another issue that gathered a large amount of public and media attention was gun ownership and mental health checks following Roof's attack. Allegedly, Roof had received his firearms purchasers permit due to gaps in the background check process.¹⁷² Another major flaw cited was the fact that Roof had a drug related arrest in his past.¹⁷³ This past drug arrest ought to have stopped his ability to purchase the firearm he used for the attack.¹⁷⁴ The missed arrest record was due in part by the system in which the FBI was using for the background checks and the major backlog of background checks that are relatively consistently at the door of the FBI.¹⁷⁵ According to law, the FBI has 90 days to complete a background check on a person or, the check is pushed through as passed.¹⁷⁶ This particular shooting had brought attention to this issue because Roof had received his firearm due to this 90 day purge.¹⁷⁷

The Roof case offered quick investigations and quick apprehension. This case was the closest to the 'by the book' investigation and arrest. The suspect was quickly identified, tracked and peacefully arrested. The issue with this particular case is that, if surveillance tactics were

¹⁷¹ Chandler, Diana. "7 Black Churches Burned in 10 Days." Baptist Press, 2015.

¹⁷² "Charleston Mass Murderer Got His Gun Because of Background Check Gaps, Internal Report Shows." Roll Call

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ "Charleston Mass Murderer Got His Gun Because of Background Check Gaps, Internal Report Shows." Roll Call

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

used to their fullest extent, Roof's social media, and writings may have been flagged prior to the attack. Though, as stated above, Roof was not supposed to legally have a firearm regardless of a prior investigation. Even if full surveillance and tracking was on Roof, the only thing the government can do legally would be to flag firearm purchases. They could not necessarily arrest him over racist rhetoric and hatred.

Omar Mateen, Pulse Nightclub Shooting

Known Motive

Omar Mateen made it clear during the police negotiations that he was an agent of the Islamic State and that he had targeted the club specifically because "*They (US military) are killing a lot of innocent people. What am I to do here when my people are getting killed over there.*"¹⁷⁸ Mateen continued, saying this about one of the two Boston Bombers "*Tamerlan Tsarnaev did his thing on the Boston Marathon ... so now it's my turn, okay?*"¹⁷⁹ Mateen also referred to himself as a "*Soldier of the God*" who was there in retaliation for the killing of a military leader in Syria weeks before the attack at Pulse nightclub.¹⁸⁰ No evidence was/is public about his training or official affiliation with the so-called Islamic State. Though Mateen's sympathies with the Tsarnaev Brothers points towards a slight affiliation with the extremist groups.

Tactics, Methods, and Targets

Omar Mateen had entered the Pulse nightclub at 2:00am, he began shooting into the crowded club as soon as he walked in.^{181,182} Mateen was using a .223 semi-automatic rifle and a

¹⁷⁸ Visser, Steve, and John Couwels. "Orlando Killer Repeatedly Referenced ISIS."

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Visser, Steve, and John Couwels. "Orlando Killer Repeatedly Referenced ISIS."

¹⁸¹ "Orlando Nightclub Shooting: How the Attack Unfolded." BBC News.

¹⁸² PATRIQUIN, MARTIN, CHARLIE GILLIS, Aaron Hutchins, and Meagan Campbell. "'I'm Going to Die'." *Maclean's* 129, no. 25 (June 27, 2016): 18.

Glock 9mm, two standard weapons found in every gun shop across America.¹⁸³ Mateen had exchanged gunfire with several police who had been working at the club.¹⁸⁴ Mateen had evaded those two officers and barricaded himself in a bathroom on the premises.¹⁸⁵ During the shooting, Mateen had killed 49 people, which at the time was the terror attack with the most casualties in modern US history.¹⁸⁶ Mateen was killed by police who had broken through his barricade after exhausting negotiations.^{187,188}

What We Learned From The Attack

A major takeaway from the Orlando shooting was the preparedness of the Orlando law enforcement and local government. The training that had taken place was heavily based on communication tactics to coordinate the efforts of emergency response.¹⁸⁹ This emergency response training was primarily done to prepare for hurricanes but has the applicable use of any emergency situation.¹⁹⁰ Another critical aspect of this case and investigation was the communication between the emergency response team and the public.¹⁹¹ The public had gotten several updates which were put into the training of the emergency response, this allowed open communication with the public and, had fostered a situation after the shooting that allowed people to gain a clear picture of what had happened and the scope of the emergency.¹⁹²

¹⁸³ Jansen, Bart. "Weapons Gunman Used in Orlando Shooting Are High-Capacity, Common."

¹⁸⁴ "Orlando Nightclub Shooting: How the Attack Unfolded." BBC News.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ PATRIQUIN, MARTIN, CHARLIE GILLIS, Aaron Hutchins, and Meagan Campbell. "'I'm Going to Die'." *Maclean's* 129, no. 25 (June 27, 2016): 18.

¹⁸⁹ Zalatoris, Joanne. "Communicating in a Catastrophe: The Lessons of Orlando." *New America*

¹⁹⁰ Zalatoris, Joanne. "Communicating in a Catastrophe: The Lessons of Orlando." *New America*

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

This attack had also offered some insight on how political rhetoric can be dangerous after such an incident.¹⁹³ The main stories in the news after Omar Mateen was named as the perpetrator, leaned heavily on his ethnic heritage and his travels to the Middle East.¹⁹⁴ This kind of rhetoric from some of the highest offices in the land and from the news media had set back Middle East politics with the US and had placed more prejudice on persons of Middle Eastern descent.¹⁹⁵

Where the Mateen attack differs heavily from the other two attacks is that Mateen was killed by law enforcement.¹⁹⁶ This may have been the only option because Mateen was heavily armed and had killed a large number of people by that point but, there are some issues that arise from killing the suspect. Mainly, there is the fear of additional threats that could be uncovered if the suspect is apprehended. At the time of the shooting there really is no way to know if the suspect is acting alone or not until the situation is completely over. In the Mateen case, he was acting alone but, suppose he was working with a cell that was planning other attacks for other days. If he was apprehended there was potential of stopping future attacks. In this specific case, there were no other attackers that were found but there very well could have been.

The last major takeaway from the Omar Mateen attack was the superb use of social media in regards to the emergency response.¹⁹⁷ Social media offered a platform for the Orlando Police Department to post quick updates without the need of a full press conference.¹⁹⁸ Social

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ "Orlando Nightclub Shooting: How the Attack Unfolded." BBC News.

¹⁹⁷ "Orlando Nightclub Shooting: How the Attack Unfolded." BBC News.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

media also offered a live update from those who were in the club when the shooting happened.¹⁹⁹ These live updates from people who were in the club had offered useful insight into the shooting itself while also allowing loved ones to know they were okay.²⁰⁰ Social media was also the point of coordination for the donation of blood after the attack.²⁰¹ Donation centers were able to post the best way for people to help with the recovery of those in need after the shooting.²⁰²

Current Federal Investigatory Policy

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has created, in 2004, a comprehensive document that showcases the protocol surrounding terror incidents.²⁰³ The document has the purpose of “Provides planning guidance and outlines operational concepts for the Federal law enforcement and investigative response to a threatened or actual terrorist incident within the United States”²⁰⁴ For the investigations, the first priority set forth is the health and wellbeing of all those in the surrounding area.²⁰⁵ Next, is preventing the act itself; within this outline, that task is given to the FBI who will conduct a “threat credibility assessment”.²⁰⁶ Next is the safety control, assessing the situation and determining what needs to be done to ensure the safety of all within the threat zone.²⁰⁷ Lastly, the document states that a priority is to “apprehend and successfully prosecute perpetrators of terrorist threats or incidents.”²⁰⁸ All of these priorities are important to have within an operational guide. These goals are used to ensure the safety of the public as well as the investigators.

¹⁹⁹ Richardson, Matthew. “The Role Social Media Played in Wake of Orlando Nightclub Massacre.” Orlando Business Journal

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ “Terrorism Incident Law Enforcement and Investigation Annex.” FEMA.gov, 2004., 1

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 1

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 2

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 11

²⁰⁷ “Terrorism Incident Law Enforcement and Investigation Annex.” FEMA.gov, 2004., 2

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 2

The threat assessment is a tool used by the FBI to determine if a threat is a real one or, if it is not likely based on several different criteria. This determines the viability of the threat while also categorizing it.²⁰⁹ This threat assessment is based on three main factors, the technical feasibility, the operational feasibility and the psychological assessment.²¹⁰ The technical feasibility is an assessment of the threat itself, if a lone-wolf threatens the use of nuclear weapons it is a fair to say that the chances of this threat being real are relatively low due to the technical capabilities of most lone-wolf terrorists.²¹¹ But, in the cases listed above all would be within the scope of reality to the investigators if they were notified prior to the incidents. Next is the operational feasibility, this is an assessment of the delivery method for the threat.²¹² Meaning, how realistic is it that this threat could be done if the threat is real. So, in the cases above, perhaps at the time of the McVeigh attack the FBI may have assumed that one person would not be able to carry out the attack based on the operational feasibility of that amount of explosives and one person carrying out the attack. Lastly is the psychological assessment, this is “(an) assessment of the likelihood that the subject(s) will carry out the threat, including a review of any written or verbal statement by the subject(s).”²¹³ For all of the subjects above, the psychological assessment would show that they had a pattern of threats and statements that would show threats being made on those they ended up targeting.

Overall, from the FEMA threat assessment it is clear that the lone-wolves covered within this thesis would be subject to early investigations. This is only the case if they were on law enforcement's radar prior to the attack which none publicly were. These investigation tools that

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 11

²¹⁰ Ibid., 11

²¹¹ Ibid., 11

²¹² Ibid., 11

²¹³ Ibid., 11

are used by law enforcement are helpful to investigations they know that they need to assess. A major issue arises when the FBI does not know that an investigation needs to take place.

Conclusions Drawn from Case Studies

The investigations and eventual prosecution of two of the three cases gone through above show that the investigation techniques are usable over a wide range of cases. These lone-wolf terrorists, Roof, and McVeigh are two examples of lone-actor terrorists but the two cases are very far apart in the operational aspect, the technical aspect, and the support they had. In the McVeigh case, law enforcement had the opportunity to speak with co-conspirators and could have tracked the purchases if the technology was available. In the Roof case, it would have been far harder to determine that he was a real threat prior to the attack. There were no unquestionable acts that would have pointed law enforcement in the direction that Roof was going. For the Mateen case, the prosecution and investigation were cut short due to Mateen being killed in a shootout with law enforcement shortly after the attack.²¹⁴

These three cases enhance the discussion surrounding lone-wolf terrorism for many reasons. First, these cases were all notable for their time while still being relevant now. Their relevance is hinged on how applicable they are to modern lone-wolf terrorist threats. Which all three are, shootings and bombings are still a real fear for people in the US. Second, these three cases all used different strategies by the perpetrators of the attack as well as the investigators. The attackers had each had separate outcomes to their cases. While Mateen was killed while law enforcement was attempting to apprehend him, McVeigh was captured inadvertently. Then there is the Roof case, which is the only case covered where a successful investigation of the crime

²¹⁴ “Orlando Nightclub Shooting: How the Attack Unfolded.” BBC News.

ended with a proper arrest. Even with this distinction, the McVeigh arrest was a successful one, though, made by chance.

What each of these cases offers from a strategic stance is that the investigatory strategies that are presently in place may have been a good way to prevent these attacks but show a major flaw. They can only be prevented if a threat is reported to the FBI. And even if brought to the FBI that does not necessarily mean that they will take the threat seriously. A note, it seems that, as stated above, these three cases would have been prevented if the suspect was reported prior to the attack but they were not. This flaw could be exploited by any lone-wolf terrorist that can hide their communications with whoever radicalized them or can hide their purchases and planning. If the type of surveillance and attention was brought to lone-wolf terrorism as is brought to group-based terrorism, the screening could potentially prevent future attacks.

The key issues discussed though unsolved, have been brought forth for further investigations and discussion. The hope is that soon enough attention will be brought to lone-wolf terrorism so that the issue can be better addressed. If more surveillance was available there is a possibility that more plans would be stopped. Currently, there seems to be a halt on lone-wolf terrorism that could be attributed to the coronavirus but, there is no reason to believe that in a post-Covid world that these kinds of terror attacks will not come back. The reasoning for the lack of lone-wolf-style terror attacks in the US during Covid is most likely due to the lack of crowds or gatherings that are common targets for these terrorists.

Conclusion

In closing, from the investigations covered it is clear that the issue of lone-wolf terrorism has an added threat of being harder to detect and prevent. A review of current literature explored the concept of four distinctive profiles of lone-wolf terrorists and the process of radicalization.

This is applicable information when analyzing modern lone-wolf terrorists, as it aids in the facilitation of a deeper understanding of who a lone-wolf terror is, what their motives are and how similar attacks could be prevented in the future. Additionally, it will continue the conversation within academia, and attempt to create and spur change within the counter-terror tactics employed against lone-wolf terrorists. Categorizing lone-wolf terrorists and studying investigational processes of past events allows for a better measure of security in the future. Studying lone-wolf terrorists, such as Timothy McVeigh, Dylann Roof, and Omar Mateen, can lead to valuable insight into the radicalization process, motives, and common similarities amongst their profiles. Thus, law enforcement can better survey at-risk individuals and prevent future racialization and attacks. Ultimately, analyzing the past is essential to changing the future.

Chapter IV:
Lone-Wolf Terrorism in the Digital Age

Executive Summary

In an increasingly digital age, the means by which radicalization occurs, the accessibility of terrorist organizations to vulnerable individuals and the methods of tracking utilized by law enforcement have transformed. Within this chapter, the digital radicalization process, the most effective methods of radicalization, and the law enforcement response to the radicalization attempts are explored. There are several guiding questions, utilized to facilitate the analysis of current literature, case studies, and transforming current global digital radicalization trends. The following questions will be explored and discussed (1) What are the key points in the radicalization process (2) What are the most effective ways for terrorist groups to radicalize via the internet (3) Is this an international issue or, a domestic one (4) How the internet has helped with investigations and apprehension after an attack (5) How the internet has helped prevent lone-wolf terrorism before it happens?

The analysis that will be generated based on these structuring research questions will formulate a description of vulnerable individuals, how terrorist organizations are utilizing digital methods via the internet and how law enforcement can integrate this data into halting radicalization processes globally. These questions will also offer a review of what the most effective tactics are, which will allow for more specific targeting of individuals for law enforcement networks. Thus, increased attention may be established with regard to radicalization in the United States. This radicalization has created unique challenges and has born a new wave of homegrown, lone-wolf terrorists. Overall, the internet has had a tremendous impact on lone-wolf terrorism with regard to prevention and apprehension. However, the progression of modern-day technology has also allowed for exponential growth in radicalization.

Introduction

In Chapter Three there was scrutiny brought to the past of lone-wolf terrorism however, within this chapter, ideas surrounding the radicalization and the use of technology in lone-wolf terrorism will be explored. This detailed exploration regarding the radicalization of vulnerable individuals will analyze the sequential steps of the terror groups' influence over certain groups within The United States. This chapter will start by giving a comprehensive review of current literature and outlay a background into the radicalization process in the digital age. Next, an exploration of who the terror groups are targeting when attempting to recruit or radicalize will be conducted via analysis of case studies, current literature, and digital trends. Further investigating the effects of this digital radicalization and how the internet helped grow lone-wolf terrorism, as well as what the effects have been for law enforcement will additionally be conducted via review and case study analysis. Finally, how the internet is used after a lone-wolf attack and how the terror groups and others who are radicalized use the attack as propaganda will be reviewed. Overall, establishing a grand strategy perspective, looking into who ought to be taking action and, who can take action to prevent lone-wolf terrorism and the radicalization and recruitment of these future potential terrorists will be explored. The digital age has fundamentally impacted the way that radicalization is initiated, facilitated, and targeted within lone-wolf terrorism. However, the progression of modern-day technology has also allowed for exponential growth in radicalization.

Review of Current Literature

Defining Radicalization

The internet has been a transformative technological advancement throughout the modern era. It has allowed individuals to connect with those around the world, increased accessibility to

information, and aided in fostering a deeper understanding of cultures across the globe. However, the internet has also introduced a new era in radicalization.²¹⁵ Often, following a lone-wolf terror attack, the globe is left asking *why* this happened and *how* this individual went through the metamorphosis of citizens to terrorists.²¹⁶ The definition of radicalization has changed throughout modern history. Arguments are made to revise the preconceived notions of what radicalization is, often associated with questions related to direct correlation between radicalization and precursors to extremism.²¹⁷ However, to truly define radicalization through a modern scope, one must assess the distinction between cognitive/attitudinal radicalization, and that of behavioral radicalization.²¹⁸ One definition often associated with radicalization is a process that engenders violence and commitment to a singular group.²¹⁹ In contrast, current research suggests that radicalization can be viewed as a predominately cognitive process, which may be exacerbated by social media, multimedia and internet influence.²²⁰ As such, radicalization may be defined as a cognitive and social process of cumulative experiences leading to an extremist view of political or religious positions, with the possibility of lending way to violence or not.²²¹ Additionally, radicalization is demonstrated via a drastic change in one's opinions, ideologies, and actions.²²² Often, these views contrast the liberal democratic ideologies associated with constitutional and vast reaching values.²²³ Overall, the definition of

²¹⁵ Frissen, Thomas. "Internet, the Great Radicalizer? Exploring Relationships between Seeking for Online Extremist Materials and Cognitive Radicalization in Young Adults." ., 1

²¹⁶ Ibid., 1

²¹⁷ Ibid., 2

²¹⁸ Ibid., 2

²¹⁹ Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Audrey Alexander, and Nick Kaderbhai. 2017. "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment." ., 1234

²²⁰ Ibid., 1234

²²¹ Frissen, Thomas. "Internet, the Great Radicalizer? Exploring Relationships between Seeking for Online Extremist Materials and Cognitive Radicalization in Young Adults." ., 2

²²² Kadivar, Jamileh. 2017. "Online Radicalization and Social Media: A Case Study of Daesh." ., 404

²²³ Ibid., 404

radicalization is contested amongst professionals, however, can be overarchingly categorized by changes within one's cognitive processes, lending to an extremist view of society, religion or politics.²²⁴

Radicalization can be subcategorized into two distinctive pyramids, that of opinion and action.²²⁵ As an individual becomes further radicalized, as in demonstrating more extremist points of view and violent actions, the more exclusive the group of similar individuals they are associated with becomes smaller.²²⁶ When assessing the opinion based pyramid of radicalization, one must start with those who hold vastly neutral political or religious opinions, generally inline with the greater majority of the public.²²⁷ However, when referencing the middle component of the opinion radicalization pyramid, these individuals hold sympathetic views of a collective cause.²²⁸ Furthermore, the apex, and smallest total number of individuals, hold strong beliefs of moral and personal obligation toward political or religious causes.²²⁹ In contrast, the action pyramidal forms of radicalization refers to those individuals who are passive with regard to political violence to those who are actively engaged in political violence, terror attack or otherwise.²³⁰ When assessing radicalization of a particular individual, it is essential to note both opinion and action based analyzes to facilitate a deeper understanding of the cognitive profile, motivation and effects of their mental state to initiate the radicalization process.

The introduction of the digital era, particularly the internet, has led to further contentment in the definition of radicalization, the process of which one becomes further radicalized and how

²²⁴Kadivar, Jamileh. 2017. "Online Radicalization and Social Media: A Case Study of Daesh.", 404

²²⁵ Frissen, Thomas. "Internet, the Great Radicalizer? Exploring Relationships between Seeking for Online Extremist Materials and Cognitive Radicalization in Young Adults.", 2

²²⁶ Ibid., 2

²²⁷ Ibid., 2

²²⁸ Ibid., 2

²²⁹ Ibid., 2

²³⁰ Ibid., 2

much the internet influences this process.²³¹ Current literature describes internet or “online” radicalization as the process in which individuals seek out extremist materials via the internet to learn, foster, and follow radical ideologies, including but not exclusively, violence, to solve a moral, religious or political agenda.²³² The introduction of the internet has an obvious anecdotal connection to increased ease in radicalization efforts.²³³ Current literature suggests that terror groups, at the international level, have embraced the internet as an increasingly accessible form of communication, connection, and influence to individuals.²³⁴ Many studies have sought to form special data on the influence of the internet, digital forms of communication and that of radicalization, which will be further explored.²³⁵

Digital Propaganda and Communication

The internet has allowed for world-wide accessibility and instantaneous connections to many individuals. However, with this new technology, terror groups and individuals who are seeking to share radicalized ideologies are increasingly able to reach vulnerable individuals by harvesting the accessibility provided by the internet. A foremost example of international terror groups utilizing online propaganda to radicalize the vulnerable is IS. To initiate and facilitate radicalization, IS often utilizes various channels and platforms in a multitude of languages.²³⁶ To target Arabic and non-Arabic audiences alike, IS produces culturally and linguistically diverse radicalization materials via the internet, including photos, videos, reports, news, magazines, and audio.²³⁷ This shift in propaganda tactics is also seen when assessing Al Qaeda,

²³¹ Kadivar, Jamileh. 2017. “Online Radicalization and Social Media: A Case Study of Daesh.”, 406

²³² Kadivar, Jamileh. 2017. “Online Radicalization and Social Media: A Case Study of Daesh.”, 406

²³³ Ibid., 406

²³⁴ Aly, Anne, Stuart Macdonald, Lee Jarvis, and Thomas M. Chen. 2017. “Introduction to the Special Issue: Terrorist Online Propaganda and Radicalization.”, 2

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ “Online Radicalization and Social Media: A Case Study of Daesh.”, 411

²³⁷ Ibid., 411

pre and post the 9/11 attacks. Prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Al Qaeda operated one website, primarily in Arabic.²³⁸ In contrast, following the 9/11 attacks, Al Qaeda relied heavily upon young adults, establishing a specific media production division, to reach vulnerable individuals throughout the western world.²³⁹ Thus, Al Qaeda began to develop modern day means of radicalization, including audiovisual material.²⁴⁰

Radicalization Through Social Media and Chat Rooms

When assessing cognitive radicalization, it is essential to analyze the impact of social media. Often, social media, such as Facebook or YouTube, are an impetus for radicalization²⁴¹ Social media allows individuals the opportunity to join groups of like-minded individuals and participate in conversation, sharing of pictures and videos.²⁴² Studies suggest that this may lead to an increased radicalized beliefs.²⁴³ Current research suggests that select social media interactions have the same impactful influence on an individual's level of radicalization as a face-to-face communicative exchange.²⁴⁴ The opportunity to communicate directly, by way of various chat rooms, messages and videos, with a member of terror or extremist groups allows an individual to build deeper connections, internalize the radicalized messages and visualize themselves as a member of radicalized groups.²⁴⁵

²³⁸ Aly, Anne, Stuart Macdonald, Lee Jarvis, and Thomas M. Chen. 2017. "Introduction to the Special Issue: Terrorist Online Propaganda and Radicalization." ., 3

²³⁹ Ibid., 3

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 3

²⁴¹ Hassan, Ghayda, Sébastien Brouillette-Alarie, Séraphin Alava, Divina Frau-Meigs, Lysiane Lavoie, Arber Fetiu, Wynn Paul Varela, et al. 2018. "Exposure to Extremist Online Content Could Lead to Violent Radicalization: A Systematic Review of Empirical Evidence."., 84

²⁴² Ibid., 84

²⁴³ Ibid., 84

²⁴⁴ Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Audrey Alexander, and Nick Kaderbhai. 2017. "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment."., 1239

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 1239

Digital chatrooms, which often allow users to remain anonymous, have also been utilized and manipulated by terror groups as a form of communication with individuals across the globe.²⁴⁶ The anonymity of being in a chatroom allows for individuals to have an increased feeling of security to discuss often forbidden topics.²⁴⁷ Studies suggest that this allows for terror groups to foster deeper connections with the individuals within the chatrooms and thus, can transition from neutrally forbidden topics to those of a more radicalized nature.²⁴⁸ However, social media is not to be viewed as an isolated method or causation of radicalization, as it is dependent upon an individual's levels of radicalization, cognitive processes and personal beliefs.²⁴⁹

Current Research on The Digital Radicalization Process

Thomas Frissen hypothesized that the radicalization process consisted of four steps, where an individual gradually and steadily adopts increasingly radical ideologies, resulting from an active search of digital materials.²⁵⁰ The four steps explored by Frissen include (1) the individual beginning to seek radicalizing information online, (2) initialization of radicalized narratives, (3) an increase in delinquency due to moral disengagement and (4) increased criminally categorized actions related to terror.²⁵¹ Additionally, Frissen suggests a correlation between juvenile crime and an increased risk of cognitive radicalization.²⁵² Their methodology included a questionnaire distributed to secondary schools, including 1,872 individuals, with the

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 1237-1239

²⁴⁷ Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Audrey Alexander, and Nick Kaderbhai. 2017. "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment."., 1237

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 1237

²⁴⁹ Kadivar, Jamileh. 2017. "Online Radicalization and Social Media: A Case Study of Daesh."., 410

²⁵⁰ Frissen, Thomas. "Internet, the Great Radicalizer? Exploring Relationships between Seeking for Online Extremist Materials and Cognitive Radicalization in Young Adults."., 4

²⁵¹ Ibid., 4

²⁵² Ibid., 4

vast majority within the high school population.²⁵³ The survey was given to high school students with the goal of gaining information regarding jihadist seeking and cognitive radicalization patterns among the general teenage population.²⁵⁴

Study results showed several jihadist radicalization materials were sought by students to varying degrees.²⁵⁵ It was reported that 36.11% of the teenagers within this study have actively sought jihadist beheading videos on the internet.²⁵⁶ Additionally, 12% and 14% of teenagers surveyed reported seeking out jihadist fora and Facebook groups.²⁵⁷ Although these numbers are significant, the radicalization of this sample did not support a high correlation between seeking out videos and increasing the level of radicalization. However, in contrast, those who sought jihadist magazines, the most exclusive group among those surveyed, demonstrated the highest correlation between media and levels of radicalization.²⁵⁸ Frissen suggests an explanation for the diverse results in correlation to be the motivation behind seeking various forms of media.²⁵⁹ It is suggested that while beheading videos are graphic in nature, they are not of an explicitly recruiting nature.²⁶⁰ Meanwhile, jihadist magazines do demonstrate explicit recruitment content which aims to foster increased radicalized beliefs in the audience.²⁶¹

Given the current research related to the online radicalization process, shifting trends in propaganda and increased rate of radicalization material accessibility, the present study will explore how these trends impact: (1) analyze patterns and trends throughout the online

²⁵³ Ibid., 4

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 4

²⁵⁵ Frissen, Thomas. "Internet, the Great Radicalizer? Exploring Relationships between Seeking for Online Extremist Materials and Cognitive Radicalization in Young Adults.", 8

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 8

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 7

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 7

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 7-8

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 8

²⁶¹ Ibid., 8

radicalization process and the profiles of those who are at increased vulnerability (2) terror groups are utilizing the internet to radicalize vulnerable individuals internationally and (3) law enforcement tactics for tracking potential threats. This exploration will be accomplished via analysis of current literature, examination of present radicalization trends, and investigation of selected case studies.

Radicalization and Recruitment in the 21st Century

The global transition to a digital age has allowed for greater accessibility and efficiency during the radicalization and recruitment process for international terror organizations. Organizations, such as The Islamic State, utilize the internet to recruit and spread propaganda more than most other terror groups.²⁶² With increased efficiency, terror group recruiters are able to identify individuals who are likely to be recruited. Often, relatively young people who are seen as outsiders within their community are targeted for radicalization.²⁶³ In conjunction with targeted recruitment processes, online terrorist propaganda serves as a precondition to believe and seek out such material.²⁶⁴ Certain groups of people are more likely to self-radicalize than others.²⁶⁵ This self-radicalization is targeted by terror groups because those who are actively seeking and researching terror-related material have shown an increased likelihood of acting on their radicalized thoughts.²⁶⁶

With the expansion and accessibility of extremist activities on the internet, individuals are transitioning to homegrown lone-wolf terrorism with increasingly minimal difficulty.²⁶⁷ This is not only due to the ease of access to propaganda and communities of like-minded people, but

²⁶² CBS, ISIS defector reveals how terror group's propaganda draws recruits.

²⁶³ Davies, Bouchard, Wu, Joffres, Frank. Social Networks, Terrorism, and Counter-terrorism, 108-109

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 110-111

²⁶⁵ Smith, Allison. "Risk Factors and Indicators Associated With Radicalization, 2018

²⁶⁶ Davies, Bouchard, Wu, Joffres, Frank. Social Networks, Terrorism, and Counter-terrorism, 110-111

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 111

also a consequence of increased accessibility of weapon schematics, strategies, and tactics.²⁶⁸ Those vulnerable to radicalization and recruiters utilize a linear set of communication methods. They begin with general public forums, then transition to private chat rooms, messaging, and video calls. Following this, they advance to encrypted and secure messaging.²⁶⁹ Finally, the recruiters will attempt to establish a meeting in person, if necessary.²⁷⁰ Utilizing these types of tactics gives the recruiters more anonymity while conducting their radicalization.²⁷¹

An important tool in the war chest of the terror networks is identifying two specific groups of individuals that they target, who are at increased vulnerability to initiate and maintain the radicalization process.²⁷² One targeted group of individuals are those willing to take action and fight for the cause, taking up arms and plans for their moment.²⁷³ This individual is the target of extreme radicalization and poses a real and active threat to the community to which they live.²⁷⁴ Though the people who fall under this distinction, though the ultimate goal of the terror organization, it is not necessarily their most effective use of time. Radicalization of these targeted individuals takes time and effort whereas, the other type of targeting helps the cause in a profound way and takes very little effort and reliably little time. In contrast, the other primarily targeted group of individuals are those who sympathize with and will tote the lines of the organization but are unlikely to act on their ideology in a violent way.²⁷⁵ These converts do interact with the organization directly online but, where the violent radicalized individuals may

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 111

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 111

²⁷⁰ The Asia Foundation and Rappler Inc., “Understanding Violent Extremism”, 14

²⁷¹ Ibid., 14

²⁷² Bouchard, Martin, *Social Networks, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Radical and Connected*. London: Routledge, 2015., 105

²⁷³ Ibid., 105

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 105

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 105

act on their ideology, these converts will spread the messages and recruit people into the organization.²⁷⁶

The use of digital tools does not just focus on the active recruitment of individuals vulnerable to radical thoughts but also serves as terror organizations' outward propaganda. This can especially be seen with al-Qaeda, where the digital footprint leaves a major impression. Al-Qaeda uses its digital platform to glorify and spread the word of their leaders, their philosophy, and grand strategy.²⁷⁷ However, their digital propaganda does not end there. Al-Qaeda uses those they refer to as martyrs to publicize the risks and operations they had committed around the world.²⁷⁸ This kind of propaganda provides al-Qaeda the ability to control the narrative shown to those who sympathize with their cause, further radicalizing those people.

Al-Qaeda's digital resources also introduce potential recruits with resources involving targeting, weaponry and security.²⁷⁹ The weaponry aspect is highlighted within the al-Qaeda's article, "how to build a bomb in the kitchen of your mom". This article presumably targets those vulnerable to radicalization who still live with their parents.²⁸⁰ This kind of publication can be taken down if found on major platforms but, it is still possible for would-be terrorists to find it and manuals like it. This was the article that inspired the Tsarnaev brothers to commit the Boston bombing in 2013.²⁸¹ The security aspect of al-Qaeda's digital outreach to potential recruits focuses on "computer security, and instructions about hacking into computer network"²⁸² This information can be used by lone-wolves especially because, if they have communication with

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 105

²⁷⁷ Violent Extremism Online : New Perspectives on Terrorism and the Internet., 27

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 27

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 27

²⁸⁰ Terrorists' Use of the Internet : Assessment and Response

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Violent Extremism Online : New Perspectives on Terrorism and the Inter

terror networks, the only likely way they will be apprehended prior to their attack is by intercepting the communications between them and their recruiter/trainer.

Lastly, al-Qaeda utilizes their digital outreach network to incite violence and targeting.²⁸³ This is the next step after the recruitment process, once they know someone is sympathetic or an active supporter, they want to get that person to act on their sympathies. Al-Qaeda will provoke people to commit “violent jihad” and will provoke revolts around certain symbolic days or events, depending on the target country or ethnicity.²⁸⁴ To continue, another powerful weapon they have in spreading terrorism and, anti-western sentiment is through “urging people to support jihadist groups like al-Qaeda and its affiliates and al-Shabaab in Somalia”.²⁸⁵ This outreach shows that al-Qaeda understands their limitations with rhetoric, regions, sympathies and would rather push someone to consider other terror networks than not support one at all.

History and Current Climate

In an increasingly digital age, the internet has served as a catalyst for the recruitment, development, and eventual execution of lone-wolf terrorism. This is demonstrated when exploring the formulation and radicalization of Junaid Hussain.²⁸⁶ Junaid created the platform in which IS has been operating their internet-based attacks.²⁸⁷ As discussed within the *Hacker Down* documentary, the only key needed to access this side of terrorism is a computer and a willingness to operate against a target unlawfully.²⁸⁸ Hussain was operating for the terror group IS but he could have been taking up a fight for any reason; he could have chosen any path of

²⁸³ Combs, Cynthia. *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, 27

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 27

²⁸⁵ Combs, Cynthia. *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, 27

²⁸⁶ *Hacker Down: The Life and Death of an ISIS Social Media Star*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

destruction. Just because he had chosen to hack and do internet-based attacks does not exclude him from being considered as a lone-wolf terrorist. He had started as a teenager hacking into websites and the personal accounts of other people. As this anti-establishment inclinations led to him joining a group that also fought against authority within the UK.²⁸⁹

As the internet becomes increasingly accessible on a global scale, concerns related to scope, tracking, effect and security have become apparent. These concerns are not answered within the documentary nor in most other sources because this threat is changing far faster than traditional warfare.²⁹⁰ As discussed in the documentary, *Hacker Down: The Life and Death of an ISIS Social Media Star*, hacking is a unique threat because those involved can often remain anonymous and frequently act alone.²⁹¹ Internet hackers, and those with significant knowledge of internet-based attacks, are prime targets for recruiters due to their value to the terror organization. An individual who possesses these qualities and who becomes radicalized requires minimal equipment and time to facilitate notable impacts within a given target.²⁹² As stated by Vida Vilić, a terror group may benefit from conducting internet-based attacks:

“The most common and obvious reasons why the terrorists rely on cyberspace are because it is significantly cheaper, completely anonymous, the variety and number of targets and potential victims are enormous and just "a click away" – there is no need to cross any distance or to be seen as a perpetrator. By using the Internet, because of its availability and distribution, it is easier to recruit and mobilize new supporters of terrorist ideas, to find information and facilities regardless of the part of the globe where they are physically located, it is easier to find sources of financing, to build connections for the implementation of joint actions, to exchange information and to educate new members for illegal activities.”²⁹³

This supports the notion that lone-wolf terrorism has the potential to generate great impacts and influence others. There are three primary categorizations within cyber terrorism:

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Kasznár, “The Challenges of the Cyber-Terrorism.”, 409-410

²⁹¹ *Hacker Down: The Life and Death of an ISIS Social Media Star*

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Vilić, “Dark Web, Cyber Terrorism, and Cyber Warfare”, 15

Simple unstructured, Advanced Structured, and Complex Coordinated.²⁹⁴ Simple and unstructured attacks involve lone actors committing crimes that constitute terrorism labeling which may include small hacking groups, similar to Hussain in his early career.^{295,296} In comparison, Advanced and Structured cyber terrorism will benefit from terror group financial and strategic support.²⁹⁷ Lastly, Coordinated, and Complex cyber terrorism is primarily done by state-sponsored hacking groups who target large entities that would usually take a lot of time, effort, and manpower to overwhelm.²⁹⁸

Communication and Propaganda

The radicalization process takes the form of recruiters reaching out, and forming a connection with an individual they have deemed to be susceptible to radicalization.²⁹⁹ This susceptibility is usually based on identifying with the suffering that a potential recruit has experienced.³⁰⁰ Those who can become radicalized will follow an ideology and eventually, be brought into a group of like-minded individuals who may radicalize them. As was said in a Congressional hearing from the 111th Congress

“ (...) there is this common perception that people get interested in something, and then they get radicalized, and then they get recruited by an organization. And from my research and my experiences doing research in the Middle East, I think we can say it is a little bit backwards from that. People get interested in something, then are recruited by an organization who then radicalizes them.”³⁰¹

This showcases the progression of those who seek out the terror networks that end up turning radical sentiment to radical ideology that can consume a person’s way of thinking.

²⁹⁴ Combs, Cynthia. Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century, 375-376

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 375

²⁹⁶ Hacker Down: The Life and Death of an ISIS Social Media Star

²⁹⁷ Combs, Cynthia. Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century, 375

²⁹⁸ Combs, Cynthia. Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century., 375-376

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 68

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 68

³⁰¹ Dr. Christopher Boucek, 111th Congress (2009), Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization., 6

Propaganda stands to be the most powerful weapon in the major terror networks war chest. The use of propaganda serves to recruit those who are willing to take action while also further pushing the sympathies of those who identify with their messaging. This messages have been proven to be very valuable to groups like al-Qaeda who determined their digital outreach and recruitment to be “a great medium for spreading the call of Jihad and following the news of the mujahideen (Islamic warriors)”³⁰² This designation was proclaimed by al-Awlaki, a high-ranking member of al-Qaeda at the time who was also the major inspiration to several lone-wolf terrorists such as Dr. Nidal Malik Hasan and Private Naser Jason Abdo.³⁰³ Terrorists such as these two prove that al-Qaeda’s digital outreach does have an impact on homegrown, lone-wolf terrorism in the US. The communication networks that terror groups can provide those who sympathize with their messaging can allow someone to receive operational manuals and news from inside the networks that can feed into the narrative and help grow the anti-western sentiment that creates terrorists.^{304,305}

One of the most effective ways in which established terror groups can use the internet for radicalization purposes is through the use of so-called training camps.³⁰⁶ These training camps are completely online and include instruction manuals and videos relating to targeting of attacks, technology and weaponry, and the use of media.³⁰⁷ Al-Qaeda’s online training camp is called Al-Battar and focuses mostly on how terror cells or radicalized individuals can carry out attacks and

³⁰² Violent Extremism Online : New Perspectives on Terrorism., 25

³⁰³ Olsson, Peter A.. Making of a Homegrown Terrorist : Brainwashing Rebels in Search of a Cause., 50

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 50

³⁰⁵ Violent Extremism Online : New Perspectives on Terrorism and the Internet., 27

³⁰⁶ Combs, Cynthia. Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century, 136

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 136-137

post all of the video online for further radicalization purposes.³⁰⁸ Propaganda like what is found from al-Qaeda cells is a driving force within the digital radicalization realm.

The propaganda does not end with overly violent and graphic content but, an important tool used by Hamas and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia to attract and radicalize children. The two groups use games and cartoons to attract children to their organization.³⁰⁹ These games and cartoons are not just fun programs that offer a flavor of radical ideology but, teach the children watching how to carry out acts of terror, assassinations and how to become suicide bombers.³¹⁰ Though these details do not directly relate to lone-wolf terrorism, it paints a picture of how far many terror cells are willing to go for the opportunity to have a future fighter. The radicalization techniques and procedures are tools the terror cells use and who they impact and how they impact matters far less than it affects people. If someone is repulsed by the media they see such as these children's programs, they may go and seek other media to continue their hate. This gives the terror organization more exposure and, the more someone seeks out media and propaganda the more likely they are to become radicalized.

Radicalization of Historical Lone-Wolf Terrorists

Dylann Roof

As previously established through a thorough case-study review in Chapter Three, Roof was labeled by expert witnesses as a 'self-radicalized' individual who had fully engrossed himself in the white supremacy movement.³¹¹ His radicalization can be attributed to literature and propaganda he had looked for on his own and, not a leadership based radicalization path as

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 137

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 137

³¹⁰ Ibid., 137

³¹¹ "Church Shooting Suspect Dylann Roof Was 'Self-Radicalized,' Authorities Say." Los Angeles Times

was seen in several previous case studies covered in Chapter Two.³¹² Even Roof's travel records were found to be consistent with someone who is on the path of radicalization, with an expert witness stating that his travel showed that he had visited numerous amounts of Confederate related locations.³¹³ All of these details, paired with the lack of leadership within the process shows that Roof was in fact a self-radicalized lone-wolf terrorist.

Timothy McVeigh

Shortly after McVeigh's departure from the US military, he had been plagued with extreme anxiety which manifested in anti-government sentiments.³¹⁴ These antigovernment feelings quickly turned into print media where McVeigh had article he had written be published in local newspapers.³¹⁵ These articles detailed the perceived decline of the US paired with fear mongering about the government taking weapons away from citizens.³¹⁶ Two major events during his radicalization had pushed his rhetoric and thoughts further, first was the shootout involving Randy Weaver and, second was the 1993 events at Waco.³¹⁷ These two events had involved firearms and federal agents attempting to take fire arms, both topics McVeigh was primed to latch on to. McVeigh's radicalization process follows a path without a leader, as he had been largely self-radicalized. McVeigh had pushed his thoughts and anxiety to the limit and acted on those thoughts in an attempt to hinder the federal government's ability to sufficiently stop firearm related crimes.

Omar Mateen

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Rajakumar, Vikram. "Alternative Perspectives on the Radicalization of Home-grown and "Leaderless" Terrorists." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 5, no. 8 (2013): 20-22.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 21

³¹⁶ Ibid., 21

³¹⁷ Ibid., 21

Omar Mateen was found to be radicalized online, according to the FBI.³¹⁸ Mateen's radicalization path follows a worrying trend among many who become radicalized, they are in a vulnerable place and, at the right moment they end up sympathizing with international terror movements or, domestic violent groups. This case is relatively similar to the case of Dylann Roof due to the fact that neither necessarily had a leader who was training, directing or planning with them but, were mesmerized by the literature and propaganda they found online. Mateen had produced clear evidence that showed his inspiration by international terror organizations and, his hatred for the homosexual community so, there was a combination of hatred and terror based motivations.³¹⁹

The Internet and the Growth of Lone-Wolf Terrorism

One of the biggest contributing factors to the use of the success of terror organization outreach online is anonymity.³²⁰ This anonymity offers would-be terrorists the ability to explore the thoughts and feelings they have without the threat of being exposed as a sympathizer or a bad actor. The anonymity, as was covered previously, helps the terror cells reach a wide audience whereas, in the past, those who sympathize would have to either make a conservative effort to travel to a known region for terror activity or, seek out a local extremist. Both prospects are rather unlikely because for someone to take those extreme steps they would have already been radicalized. All of this is next to the internet where a sympathizer can be in a chat room with others who sympathize and those who are active members of the organization. The internet offers a middle ground between thoughts and action.

³¹⁸ "FBI and Obama Confirm Omar Mateen Was Radicalized on the Internet." The Guardian.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Bouchard, Martin, *Social Networks, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Radical and Connected*. London: Routledge, 2015., 105

The other major contributing factor for the internet being such an effective tool for terror organization's outreach and radicalization is the wide net they can cast for future potential converts.³²¹ This outreach is likely the most influential part of the use of the internet by these terror organizations. This is due to the major difference between non-internet recruitment and internet base recruitment scaling. As was said by Martin Bouchard, in reference to terror networks' use of social media: "This allows these groups to promote awareness of their cause and to convey their message to, and perhaps foster sympathy from, an international audience".³²² The scale of the media and propaganda on the internet can reach almost everyone in the world meaning, there will presumably be an increase in recruitment.

Weapons, Tactics, and Resources

A major role online resources provided by terror networks plays is publishing weapon development and implementation tactics. These guides are circulated and saved by those who sympathize with the terror networks' cause and can be distributed to those who have expressed interest in taking action as well as those who the network is attempting to radicalize.³²³ The use of these guides in the radicalization process can be used to showcase how others have made martyrs of themselves using the same strategies and technology.³²⁴ These weapon guides have played an important role in the violent acts of lone-wolf terrorists in the modern era.³²⁵

International and Domestic Radicalization

The process of radicalization transcends throughout the world, regardless of race, orientation, or origin. The introduction of the internet has allowed for recruiters from across the

³²¹ Ibid., 105

³²² Bouchard, Martin, *Social Networks, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Radical and Connected*. London: Routledge, 2015., 105

³²³ "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment.", 1241

³²⁴ Violent Extremism Online : New Perspectives on Terrorism and the Internet., 27

³²⁵ "Inspire Magazine: A Staple Of Domestic Terror." Anti-Defamation League

globe to interact with at-risk individuals to discuss radicalized thoughts and actions. Without the internet, the radicalization process would be far more involved and demand the dedication of those who were becoming radicalized. Without internet access or invention, these individuals would have to seek out like-minded persons in their community or, travel to regions with known sympathizers. Both of these actions would open up a vulnerable person who was seeking them out to the liability of being caught far easier due to the face-to-face nature of these meetings. Tracking and reporting of a suspect would have been far easier due to in-person meetings and more open communications. In comparison, the modern radicalization landscape allows communications can be hidden and deep under layers of encryption and hidden networks. The modern radicalization landscape allows those who are seeking radicalization-related literature, training, and propaganda to have access to all they need with a few strokes of the keyboard rather than international travel and face-to-face meetings.

The changing landscape of the radicalization process has created blurred lines regarding the distinction between domestic terror and international terror due to the ease and simplicity of access to terror related resources online. The FBI has a clear distinction between domestic and international terrorism which is as follows: “International terrorism: Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations (state-sponsored).”³²⁶ vs. “Domestic terrorism: Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.”³²⁷ These differences, though distinct, leave perpetrators such as Omar

³²⁶ “Terrorism.” FBI.

³²⁷ “Terrorism.” FBI.

Mateen and Timothy McVeigh out of both categories while also being in both categories. This is due to the blurred lines in a complex modern world where domestic and international issues tend to, in many cases, be one in the same.

International Implications

As Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said: “The Internet is a prime example of how terrorists can behave in a truly transnational way; in response, States need to think and function in an equally transnational manner.”³²⁸ This encapsulates the true international nature of radicalization and the recruitment process. Even if there is a lone-wolf terrorist in a small town in the US, that does not mean that it is necessarily an isolated occurrence. Recruitment and radicalization online can cross borders and cross platforms. Terror networks using the internet in radicalization and recruitment is an international issue that needs leadership. This leadership could be found in the US if action is taken to unify other nations behind the cause.

So, it has been established that this is in fact an international issue, one that goes further than just lone-wolf terrorism, though it plays an integral role in the target audience for the digital outreach of terror organizations. The question must be asked, what are countries doing about the issue? Nations such as the US have recognized that an issue exists, “ U.S. documents emphasize international cyber cooperation (interoperability, intelligence sharing, training) with [like-minded countries, industry, academia and civil society]”.³²⁹ This does show that the US is willing to work with other nations on intelligence gathering operations as well as general cooperation on the digital front.³³⁰

³²⁸ United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. “THE USE OF THE INTERNET FOR TERRORIST PURPOSES.”, 5

³²⁹ Online Terrorist Propaganda, Recruitment, and Radicalization., 378

³³⁰ Ibid., 378

Internet Impact on Law Enforcement

With current surveillance techniques being increasingly complex, encrypted and intricate, it has become essential for intelligence agencies to sequentially analyze the data and make a connection to terrorists easily. One such tool that is being utilized to analyze connections within terrorist networks and radicalization via the internet meta-data. Meta-data is stored data by intelligence agencies to determine, track and survey who a specific, targeted individual is contacting, how they are contacting them and how frequently they are contacting them.³³¹ This strategy of collecting, storing and analyzing meta-data can be expanded to include internet search history for key words, shopping history and location data.³³² All of this data can be tracked and analyzed by intelligence agencies to identify terror sympathizers, identify potential communications and explore their activities throughout the radicalization process.

Tele-communication and social media entities provide personal, targeted digital data which allow the National Security Agency the opportunity to identify, analyze and determine potential connections from individuals and a larger terror cell.³³³ Though this sounds invasive, it is the same strategy the tele-communication and tech companies do to consumers every day.³³⁴ These companies produce cross platform profiles on a consumer to determine who they are for targeted advertisements. Similarly, the intelligence community is able to generate profiles on people to determine what their threat level is and, if further surveillance is necessary to prevent further radicalization.³³⁵ The metadata can be used to create profiles on potential future terrorists who happen to begin actively seeking for propaganda, communication networks or media

³³¹ Metadata, Pomerantz, Jeffrey The MIT Press, 2015., 118-122

³³² Metadata, Pomerantz, Jeffrey The MIT Press, 2015., 120

³³³ Ibid., 126

³³⁴ Ibid., 125

³³⁵ Ibid., 125

provided by terror networks. All of this data can be collected and connections can be made prior to the terrorist 'going dark' by using a series of protected servers and VPN scrambling.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been established that there is a connection between the introduction of the internet and an increasing number of radicalized individuals. This connection relates directly to the issue of lone-wolf terrorists due to the fact that many of those who have become radicalized can and will act alone. The internet has allowed for increased accessibility, however, terror groups have transitioned radicalization to primarily a digital form. Thus, radicalization has become quicker and increasingly streamlined. Terror groups often identify vulnerable individuals, who are initially seeking terror propaganda independently, to further radicalize via various online platforms, including chat rooms, social media, and visual audio formats.

There are several key aspects of the radicalization process, from general propaganda to instruction manuals, these tools are used to create the sympathizers and terrorists of the future. One of the most important takeaways is the terror networks' use of digital media in the radicalization process. It has been proven that different forms of digital media offer vulnerable people the resources to continue their path to radical thought. Next, is the terror networks' use of online chat rooms, this is an important step in the radicalization process due to the fact that the recruiter on the other side can play into a vulnerable individual's concerns and sympathies.

Terror groups utilize a multitude of diverse media to increase the radicalization of targeted individuals. Terror groups often utilize digital propaganda in diverse languages to maximize their potential audiences. Digital propaganda includes, but is not limited to videos, magazines, speeches, radio, and television. Furthermore, the internet allows terror groups to infiltrate chatrooms and social media groups to connect with individuals vulnerable to greater

radicalization. Within these chat groups, terror organizations are able to establish connections with vulnerable individuals, who are more likely to ask questions and openly communicate due to the anonymous nature of these groups. This allows for greater efficiency in the radicalization process and for terror groups to reach individuals in the western world, who were inaccessible prior to the introduction of the internet.

Although the internet has allowed terror groups to identify those vulnerable to radicalization, it has also aided law enforcement to do the same. Law enforcement is able to utilize meta-data to identify these individuals based on their online activity. By establishing patterns in online activity, typical keyword searches, or communication with specific networks, law enforcement is better able to stop the radicalization process prior to the individual engaging in violent acts. This has the potential to aid law enforcement in decreasing the amount of radicalization on the internet, thus, decreasing the amount of lone-wolf radicalization-based activities within the United States.

Terror networks use the internet to spread their messaging as well as recruit vulnerable people in their network proves that this cannot be treated as a domestic issue. These recruiters can be reaching out to people from across the world and create radical thoughts. With the internet revolution came a revolution of the way in which the international community must deal with terror networks and their outreach. A network can spread propaganda, hate, massaging, and resources around the world without leaving their computer. This issue clearly transcends borders and affects the biggest cities to the smallest communities. From the wealthiest countries to the most poverty-stricken, anywhere that someone has internet access, they have access to a global terror network.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

Conclusion

This thesis finds that lone-wolf terrorism is rapidly transforming. This means that, law enforcement agencies must adapt to the ever-changing nature of radicalization, recruitment, and motivations. As demonstrated through case study analysis, review of current literature, and exploration of transforming trends, the internet has served as a catalyst for the evolving profile of a lone-wolf terrorist as well as those at risk for increased radicalization. However, the internet has also allowed the opportunity for law enforcement agencies to facilitate strict protocol to decrease the rate of radicalization, research the profiles of past lone-wolf terrorists and develop methods to intervene in the radicalization process.

In Chapter II, surrounding lone-wolf terrorism are assessed. This chapter utilized existing definitions and analysis to challenge many people's preconceived notion of what a lone-terrorist is and who they are. This analysis produced a definition of a lone-wolf terrorist while also paving a path away from the traditional definition. Also established within this chapter is the thought that lone-wolf terrorism is a tool in the large terror organization's tool belt. Meaning that the lone-wolf terrorist is one of the most effective ways in which a terror organization can have an operative go untracked and unnoticed in many cases. Creating a profile of a lone-wolf terrorist is one of the first steps in combating this growing threat. Through the use of past events and terror analysis, this chapter established an understanding of a modern lone-wolf terrorist profile.

Loner's, Colleagues, or Peers? Assessing the Social Organization of Radicalization, offered three distinct cognitive and behavioral profiles for lone-wolf terrorists. First, a lone-wolf terrorist can be categorized as a "loner".³³⁶ These individuals seek out radicalized materials

³³⁶ Holt, Thomas J., Joshua D. Freilich, Steven M. Chermak, Colleen Mills, and Jason Silva, *Loners, Colleagues, or Peers? Assessing the Social Organization of Radicalization*

independent of outside influence, are self-organized, and act independently of co-conspirators. Next, radicalized individuals can be subcategorized as “colleagues”.³³⁷ Individuals with this categorization often work with others during the radicalization process, engaging in conversation with like-minded individuals, to devise plans and share radicalized thoughts. Furthermore, these individuals are often lacking executive functioning organizational skills, but demonstrate great strength in structuring knowledge and sequential events. Finally, the last type of lone-wolf terrorist are those who identify as an active member within a terror organization, but choose to work alone. These individuals are classified as “peers”.³³⁸ These are all examples of lone-wolf terrorists, but have distinctive personality, radicalization and cognitive traits associated with them. Thus, delving deeper within the profiles of lone-wolf terrorists can help identify these individuals early within the radicalization process, to hinder their efforts to further radicalize.

In Chapter II, further exploration of what a lone-wolf terrorist is and how the lone-wolf terrorist operates is done. These concepts are investigated through the use of case studies, a lens of law enforcement analysis, and the investigatory/apprehension procedures used. This chapter utilized modern case studies and current literature of what are usually considered the most famous example of lone-wolf terrorism, in the modern age. Though the three cases covered are rather different, the similarities they have support and showcase the issues within the investigations and screening of lone-wolf terrorists.

The first case study analyzed was that regarding Timothy McVeigh of the Oklahoma City Bombing. While McVeigh did engage with several co-conspirators during the radicalization process, ultimately he acted alone during the violent attack. This is classified as a colleague lone-

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

wolf terror attack. During the radicalization process, McVeigh expressed radicalized thoughts regarding the anti-federal government. The government utilized profiling tactics to determine that McVeigh was their suspect following their attack, including identifying his occupation, race, gender, age, and personality type. This profile, in conjunction with witness testimony, led to their narrowed search for McVeigh. The investigation and subsequent arrest of McVeigh led to transformative changes within the FBI and government investigatory tactics. This included more efficient investigative practices, interviews, and the collection of evidence-based on the terroristic profile created.

The second case study analyzed was Dylann Roof of the Charleston Church Shooting. Roof experienced radicalization of political thoughts toward a particular race of people. Due to his radicalization process, whereas he acted alone and self-radicalized by way of the internet, Dylann Roof can be classified as a ‘loner’ lone-wolf terrorist. An impact garnered from Dylann Roof’s attack was the profile of mental health for lone-wolf terrorists. His profile led to law enforcement and professionals being given the opportunity to analyze the mental health of at-risk individuals, study his path to radicalization, and develop programs with specific background checks for at-risk individuals.

The last case study analyzed was that of Omar Mateen, of the Pulse Nightclub Shooting. Omar Mateen was an example of a ‘peer’ lone-wolf terrorist as he self-identified as a member of the Islamic State, however, he acted alone in his violence. This was an act derived from political and religious extremism. This case had been a particularly interesting one because there was no additional information that was available from Mateen after the incident due to his death in the police shootout. The Mateen case and its conclusions largely were based upon literature that was

found in his belongings, travel logs, information found on his computer, and his online search history.

Chapter IV delves into the most modern issue regarding lone-wolf terrorism, the internet. It was established in chapter IV that the internet is one of the strongest tools terror organizations, and lone-wolves, have at their disposal. Through the use of the internet, terror organizations can reach a wide audience of potential supporters and sympathizers. This wide audience is reached through the use of several different avenues of online propaganda, chatrooms, and social media sites. The most common form of radicalization propaganda are videos of fighting and general violence to individualized chat rooms that feed into a vulnerable person's gripes with society or how their life is going.

To follow that, the resources that are made available to lone-wolf terrorists through the internet have made far more advances, better trained, and more effective terrorists. Resources that are being provided by groups, such as al-Qaeda, have changed the landscape of how sympathizers are tracked and how deadly the outcomes of terror incidents are. These resources range from how to conceal online activity to how to build an effective bomb. These tactics circulated by al-Qaeda have changed how law enforcement and the intelligence community can cope with the growing issue of home-grown, lone-wolf terrorism.

The process of radicalization can take several forms but, the most common approach to the issue is that someone who sympathizes with an organization's cause will be in contact with someone who takes simple sympathies and builds upon them to create a situation that ends with full radicalization. Radicalization is defined within this paper as the process in which an individual takes steps from a mere sympathizer to the next step to someone who is willing to take

action on their sympathies. A radicalized person has a paradigm shift to ensure that all of their world views do not contradict the narrative they have been fed.

The radicalization process is not sequential, rather, it is a progression of radicalized thoughts, which lead to actions of violence, extreme political or religious beliefs. This process begins with an individual's interest in a particular sect of a religious or political movement. The individual's involvement in this sect can sometimes lead them to a smaller set of people within that larger group who can pivot to more violent rhetoric or action. These small groups are usually where vulnerable individuals are radicalized. These small groups could be physical groups of people or found online. When online, these smaller groups are likely to be in chat rooms where identities can be hidden and the echo chamber can be loud. Once pulled into the narrative, many of these vulnerable people will continue down the path of radicalization until they are recruiting others or are violent.

Recommendations Based on Findings

Identification of At-Risk Individuals

As outlined, there are three various profiles demonstrated amongst historic lone-wolf terrorists. These profiles, designated as “loner”, “colleagues” and “peers”, are varied in nature and can be identified early within the radicalization process. “Loners” seek out radicalized materials independently, are well organized, and act alone. It is recommended that law enforcement agencies monitor the online activity of individuals to identify those who are independently seeking out propaganda material. “Colleagues” often work with others throughout the radicalization process, they are likely less organized than “loners” and seek out like-minded individuals. It is recommended that law enforcement agencies engage with these individuals

online to halt the radicalization process, as they are likely to seek others online. Due to the impacted nature of executive functioning skills within the “colleagues” profile, if law enforcement engages with these individuals prior to them initiating the tasks associated with complete radicalized thoughts, it is likely to decrease or halt the radicalization process. Lastly, individuals with profiles consistent with “peers” actively engage with terror groups via the internet, identify as a member of these groups, and facilitate violence in the name of these groups individually. When attempting to identify and apprehend these individuals, law enforcement agencies should monitor the activity within terror group online networks, identifying individuals who frequent these groups and engage with them via the internet.

Patterns are also demonstrated with regard to method of radicalization, and connection to terror groups. First, the connection to outside terror groups was a very common theme, more specifically, connections to al-Qaeda and Anwar al-Awlaki. These connections are not a coincidence, al-Qaeda expands large amounts of resources to online recruitment. Other connections that were seen throughout the case studies were weapons of choice. The weapons that were used were either firearms or bombs, the intriguing point about that is the fact that no other chemical or radioactive weapons were utilized by the cover persons. Using weapons such as chemical and radioactive, though not unseen, is very uncommon. Weapons of mass destruction like these ought to be a top priority for law enforcement due to their effectiveness and the lasting effects on the area. It is not inconceivable that a lone-wolf could, in theory, use WMDs such as those mentioned in an attack.

Following a lone-wolf terror attack, a profile of the individual should be generated and secured private from the general public. As seen within the analyzed case studies, there are several trends within the cognitive, behavioral and motivational profiles of lone-wolf terrorists.

Following an attack, it is essential for law enforcement to generate a private profile of the lone-wolf terrorist independent of media influence or impact. This is due in part to the educational process of profiling lone-wolf terrorists. Law enforcement gaining data on lone-wolf terrorist digital and radicalization trends is essential in prevention of future lone-wolf terrorist attacks. Analyzing the cognitive, behavioral and motivational profiles of known lone-wolf terrorist, and comparing them to those of historic terrorists will allow for a greater understanding and development of what an at-risk individual appears to be physically, mentally and digitally. This will allow law enforcement the opportunity to identify individuals early within the radicalization process, engage in deradicalizing conversations or methods and halt radicalization prior to violent actions. It is essential for these profiles to remain independent of media influence or impact as terror organizations can utilize them much like law enforcement, to identify individuals more likely to generate radicalized thoughts.

Monitoring of Online Chatrooms

As previously mentioned, chatroom and social media groups serve as a primary means of communication between recruiters and those at risk for further radicalization. Due to the anonymous nature these groups provide, being individuals can remain anonymous via fake identities, it has been shown that chatroom and social media groups are sought by those beginning to become increasingly radicalized. Often, individuals who are beginning to have increasingly radicalized thoughts seek chatrooms and social media groups to communicate with like-minded individuals, ask questions that are less likely to be asked in a non-anonymous setting. This can lead to furthering radicalized thoughts, and potentially dangerous or violent actions, and the development of a lone-wolf terrorist.

To combat the rising number of radicalized individuals via social media and chat rooms, law enforcement can also take advantage of the anonymous nature allotted in these environments. Based on the research conducted on the radicalization process, when individuals are beginning to seek out like-minded individuals and joining social media groups, it is a very influential period in the radicalization process. To capitalize upon this influential period, law enforcement agencies should implement specific and specialized task forces to infiltrate these groups, engage with these individuals and begin an attempt to slowly halt the furthering of radicalized thinking. When engaging with at-risk individuals, law enforcement agencies should not approach the conversation with overt signs of deradicalizing intentions. Rather, just as is done within terror groups attempting to recruit, law enforcement officers should first engage in conversation with at-risk individuals, build a trusting rapport and slowly transition the conversation to that of a deradicalizing nature. Implementing specific task forces to engage with individuals in chat rooms and via social media will allow law enforcement to have direct communication with those frequenting these groups, seeking out propaganda, and engaging in radicalized discussions. This will give the opportunity for law enforcement to intervene early within the radicalization process, halting radicalized thoughts and potentially decreasing the likelihood of violent actions.

Tracking Internet Activity via Meta-Data

Utilizing the meta-data to track the digital propaganda people are searching for is likely the best way to track the radicalization process before the individual conceals their online history. This method would require intelligence agencies to create databases tracking keywords and search terms. This database would connect the propaganda that is most likely to radicalize a vulnerable individual and the IP addresses that are looking them up. Through the use of the IP

address, the search history along with communications can be tracked to identify that individual's likelihood of radicalization. If the person is of a high likelihood of radicalization, local police and the ATF would be notified and an investigation would take place. Pending the investigation, tracking online activity, and communication logs would be collected until the full investigation is completed.

The most effective approach to apprehending recruiters, identifying those participating in radicalized conversation, and those seeking online propaganda methods used by terror organizations are utilizing meta-data to create webs of communication between known terrorists and vulnerable people. To bring the fight directly to the organizers of the digital radicalization front, law enforcement ought to use the meta-data collected to identify kingpin recruiters to target for further monitoring. This intelligence-gathering operation would ideally widen the scope of monitoring to all connected to the known recruiters. Furthermore, one of the most impactful changes would be data sharing with other intelligence agencies from allied nations. Sharing data on known recruiters, and co-conspirators will allow for more arrests and monitoring to take place without the fear of violating international law.

Realistic Implementation of Recommendations

The concept of lone-wolf terrorism and radicalization is not uniquely modern in nature but has transformed throughout modern-day eras. The introduction of the internet has served as a catalyst for an increasing rate and accessibility to radicalization and radicalized materials. Thus, it is essential that law enforcement adapts to the current trends to better prevent future attacks. Although the process of meta-data, monitoring online chat rooms, and identifying individuals at greater risk of radicalization is time-consuming and all-encompassing in nature, if the necessary

funds are allocated to this process, it may help prevent further radicalization of vulnerable individuals, decreasing the likelihood of future violent attacks and protecting the general public.

Though all that was recommended would greatly help the counterintelligence operation against terror organizations, it is not without its faults. First, and foremost, there are major constitutional concerns when considering tracking and monitoring in this way. These concerns are directly related to the warrantless searches that would be conducted throughout the program. Though, as was covered earlier, there are existing programs that have very similar functions. These programs have been working to collect and sift through the meta-data of every individual in the US and, with several additions to the layers of sorting, this program could very well be adjusted to serve the needs of this national security concern.

In conclusion, in an increasingly digital age, the internet has been the catalyst of increased radicalization on the international level, leading to an increased number of radicalized individuals, violent acts, and future potential threats. The internet has allowed terror groups to build connections with individuals around the globe, share their radicalized thoughts, and increase the radicalization of vulnerable individuals. They have utilized diverse media to target individuals with the potential to become further radicalized, benefiting from the anonymity of online chat rooms, to build connections, openness to scaffolding upon minimal radicalized thoughts, and establish the predecessors to violent and overtly radicalized actions. However, the internet has allotted the opportunity for law enforcement to track, explore and determine targeted individuals to halt radicalization prior to total radicalization. Overall, the internet has impacted the radicalization process from both the perspective of terror groups and law enforcement internationally, and thus, has the potential to be an essential tool in elevating the amount of radicalized lone-wolf terrorists. This has allowed for the identification of similarities amongst

lone-wolf profiles, leading to the generation of several cognitive and behavioral profiles. Further surveillance, monitoring, and apprehension from law enforcement, given these profiles, will allow for increased prevention of attacks and protection from violence in the future.

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